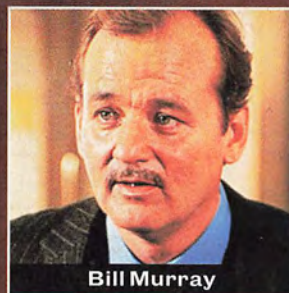


Tom Hanks

«STARRING»



Lisa Kudrow



Bill Murray

#466 • January 8, 1999

Entertainment WEEKLY

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ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY (ISSN 10490434) IS PUBLISHED WEEKLY, EXCEPT BIWEEKLY THE LAST ISSUES OF FEBRUARY, JUNE, AUGUST, AND DECEMBER, AND WITH AN EXTRA ISSUE IN MAY. BY ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY INC., A WHOLLY OWNED SUBSIDIARY OF TIME INC. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: 1675 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, NY 10019. JOHN SQUIRES, PRESIDENT; GEORGE H. VOLLMUTH, TREASURER; ROBERT E. MCCARTHY, SECRETARY. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, NY, AND ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. U.S. SUBSCRIPTION: \$51.48 FOR 52 ISSUES. [CANADA POST INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS MAIL (CANADIAN DISTRIBUTION) SALES AGREEMENT NO. 545651 GST 12480664781] CANADA POST RETURNS: POSTAL STM. A. P.O. BOX 4327, TORONTO, ON M5W 3H5 POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY, POST OFFICE BOX 30608, TAMPA, FL 33630-0608. ©1999 ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED. ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY INC. PRINTED IN THE USA.



Keri, Oh So Very

YOUR COVER OF *FELICITY*'S Keri Russell was absolutely out of this world. (Talk about a beautiful face!) I have been watching *Felicity* every Tuesday since it started, and I can't tell you how much I thoroughly enjoy the show. I truly believe that it is the breakout smash of 1998. Keri Russell is a joy to watch, and the show keeps me coming back for more. Any chance you could fix me up on a blind date with Keri?

MICKY A. GUTIER

divaboymicky@hotmail.com
Phoenix

I WAS THRILLED EW REALIZED that *Felicity* deserved to be in the editorial spotlight. There have been a lot of questions as to whether the show lives up to all the hype, but modest Nielsen ratings are hardly an indication of the quality of this program. Every aspect of *Felicity* is superb: the writing, the directing, the act-

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MAIL

This week was a strange one in the world of Mail, as most of the letters we got were not for our huge TV Winners and Losers cover story (#462, Dec. 11), but for two of the smallest items in the issue. The first set concerned the casting hubbub surrounding the *Phantom of the Opera* film: "Nothing against Antonio Banderas—he's just not the man for the part of the Phantom," says Joella Knapp of Woodville, Tex. "This role belongs to Michael Crawford." Adds Dori Bruns of Fallbrook, Calif., "The Hunk of the Month is just no substitute." The other set was about our C- review of Depeche Mode's singles album. "Depeche Mode only gets better as they get older, something that your reviewer missed the boat on," says Doug Simpson of Voorhees, N.J.

ing; it should not be overlooked as simply another teen drama.

ANDY CHANG

heycool1@hotmail.com
Toronto, Ontario

WE ARE ECSTATICALLY grateful for the mention of the CSFWS. It's not that we hate *Felicity*; we're just eager to fundamentally disregard our affection for the show, and feel obligated to share our immoderate viewpoints with anyone who stumbles into our clutches.

KARYN SINGER

The Contemptuous Sardonic
Felicity Watchers Society
csfws@hotmail.com
Palmdale, Calif.

Corps Audience

JAG ISN'T "TV'S DEEPEST, darkest secret" to anyone but the editors of EW. The rare mention you ever make of it is in the Top 30 ratings list. The fact that it was No. 9 the week of Nov. 23–29 should tell you that there's something other than *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *King of the Hill* on Tuesday nights.

LAURIE HERMANC-MOORE

Powell, Ohio

JOE FLINT'S PIECE ON THE networks' most desired demographics was both surprising and informative. I must, how-

ever, point out a major semantic error: When referring to an advertising issue concerning JAG, Don Bellisario is said to have "spoken like a true ex-Marine." Out of respect for the few and the proud, you must be made aware that the correct term is "former Marine." There is no such thing as an "ex-Marine"; once a Marine, always a Marine. Semper fi!

JASON OHL

mikeo777@vegasnet.net
Las Vegas

Tube Ties

I HAVE BEEN A LOYAL subscriber for three years now, and occasionally I have thought about writing in and agreeing with something you've said. But I never have. Until now. Two weeks in a row you have spotlighted my favorite new shows of the season. Last week, it was *Sports Night*, the show that even my friends who don't watch television watch. This week, *The King of Queens*, which has me in stitches every time I see it. Keep spotting the good ones and inadvertently validating my sense of humor.

SHAWNA E. LEONARD

MoreTeaVic@aol.com
Canfield, Ohio

MIKE FLAHERTY MADE AN excellent point in his Remote

Patrol article about the casting of black actors as police characters with authority but little screen time. But how could he neglect to mention *Homicide: Life on the Street*'s Andre Braugher?

AMY ASCH

New York City

My Antonio

I DON'T SEE THE PROBLEM [with Antonio Banderas' casting on *Phantom*]. This is one movie that is big enough for the both of them. Michael Crawford is and forever will be the quintessential Phantom of the Opera, and Banderas is the perfect Raoul. Charming, romantic, handsome; no covering that face with a mask. Well, that problem's solved. Now, should we discuss Christine?

CHERYL ANDERSEN

cheryla928@aol.com
Lodi, N.J.

CORRECTIONS: Dan Wilson is the lead singer of Semisonic (*News & Notes*). Bone Thugs-N-Harmony are from Cleveland (*Music*).

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Oscar Dream Team

It's Hanks vs. Brando. Pick the greatest Oscar winners of all time.

World War Too

Is *The Thin Red Line* as riveting as *Saving Private Ryan*? Post your review.

NEXT WEEK IN EW

- No sophomore jinx for Jewel. Plus reviews of
- ◆ *Affliction* with Nick Nolte (Movies)
- ◆ The WB's *Batman Beyond* (Television)
- ◆ Busta Rhymes' *Extinction Level Event* (*The Final World Front*) (Music)

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The So



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NEWS+NOTES

January 8, 1999 | Movies | TV | Books | Music | Video | Multimedia | Edited by Albert Kim

THE PARTY LINE

Our awards for the best, the worst, and the unforgettable in Hollywood revelry.
by Tricia Laine

WHO NEEDS TO PARTY LIKE IT'S 1999? For Hollywood's glitterati, getting down and funky in 1998 was more than enough. In the last 12 months, the celeb set celebrated at more than 400 affairs to remember, including premieres, awards shows, fund-raisers, and other industry soirees. "It's fun to see what [stars] look like in real life," *Just Shoot Me's* **David Spade** ex-

plained at the summer's MTV Video Music Awards. "I don't ever see these people, because they're not at Taco Bell like I am." Of course, the glamorous life can get overwhelming. After his first trip to the Emmy Awards in September, *The Practice's* **Dylan McDermott** summed up: "It's absolute insanity." Herewith, highlights from the madness, in the form of ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY's second annual Party Awards:

THE FREQUENT-FLIER TROPHY To **Kevin Spacey**, who left his London stage production of *The Iceman Cometh* to attend the L.A. opening of *The Negotiator* for a few brief minutes. The actor made the London-New York-L.A.—

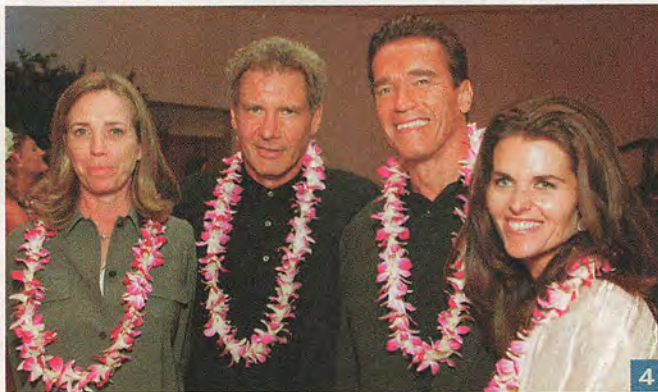
New York-London journey via Concorde and private jet in less than 24 hours.

THE RUSH LIMBAUGH INSENSITIVITY AWARD To **Madonna**, who flaunted an exposed nipple, via a revealing Versace

gown, at the Fire & Ice Ball, which raises funds for breast-cancer research. Runner-up: Madonna, at the MTV Video Music Awards, where she offended Hindus by combining religious mehndi markings

with sexually suggestive clothing and dancing.

THE MOST INTREPID APPEARANCE BY A CELEB To **Rose McGowan** (*Scream*), who made freak-show boyfriend **Marilyn Manson** look downright con-



BASH FULL Madonna raises eyebrows at the (1) Fire & Ice Ball and (2) MTV Video Music Awards; (3) McCarthy cashes out; (4) screenwriter Melissa Mathison and hubby Harrison Ford with Arnold Schwarzenegger and wife Maria Shriver at the sumptuous *Six Days, Seven Nights* luau

servative when she wore a barely, *barely* there chain-link dress to the MTV Video Music Awards.

A BOX OF LEE PRESS-ON NAILS To **Jewel**. After playing a few licks at the Creative Coalition Spotlight Awards in New York, the singer stopped mid-song to ask if anyone had a nail clipper. After procuring one from a fan, she proceeded to entertain guests with an impromptu onstage manicure.

THE PARTY LEAST LIKELY TO BE ENDORSED BY MARTHA STEWART The glumly inappropriate spectacle PolyGram concocted for *Return to Paradise*. After watching hellish scenes of torture in a Third World prison, the audience was shepherded to a re-creation of a Malaysian street market, complete with a penful of live chickens next to the chicken-kabob booth. *Paradise*'s **Vince Vaughn** compared the party to a funeral.

THE DON HO COMMEMORATIVE LUAU PRIZE To Disney, which created a Hawaiian



1

feast—replete with coconut-shell drinks and bushels of lobster—for the premiere of *Six Days, Seven Nights*. The lavish spread had better production values than the movie itself.

THE MISS MANNERS ETIQUETTE AWARD To **Rupert Everett**, who discarded his unwanted program at the black-tie Carousel of Hope Ball into a potted plant. Don't ask where he tossed his gum.



2



3

EXPOSED (1) McGowan; (2) Lopez; (3) Spacey and Samuel L. Jackson

THE NECESSITY-IS-THE-MOTHER-OF-INVENTION PRIZE

To **Fiona Apple** for her nylon toiletry pouch—cum—Oscar purse. “My bag is that thingie inside a suitcase,” she explained. “You know, the thing that Velcros on? It’s all I had that was black.”

THE CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT AWARD To **William Hurt**, the only major cast member MIA from *The Big Chill*'s 15th-

anniversary fete. “I’m told he’s out of the country,” said **Kevin Kline**, rolling his eyes, “which he was during shooting, too.”

THE OSCAR MADISON FASHION AWARD To unglam rocker **Beck**, whose bed head and ripped pants were way out of place at the black-tie Fire & Ice Ball. His excuse: “I never go to things like this. This is just an experiment.”

THE PUFF DADDY WANNABE AWARD To **Jennifer Lopez**, for having the most annoying entourage at the MTV Video Music Awards. Her retinue irritated presenters and performers by constantly snaking through the backstage crowd like a runaway conga line.

THE 14-MINUTES-AND-COUNTING AWARD To **Jenny McCarthy**. When asked what she would bid on at the Carousel of Hope auction, the former *Singled Out* cohost replied, “To tell you the truth, I’m not going to bid on anything because I don’t have any money.” ■ (Additional reporting by Jessica Shaw)

Red Menace

AT FIRST, they were a minor annoyance—a high-tech spitball. But now the spitballs are getting dangerous. Last month a seventh grader in Kansas City suffered permanent eye damage after a laser pointer, one of those key-chain-size devices originally used for business presentations, was aimed into his eye.

Until recently, laser pointers, able to project up to 800 yards and priced as low as a teen-friendly \$9.95, had merely been an irritation when kids flashed them at the movie screen. But Glenn Zajicek, who manages a three-screen theater in El Campo, Tex., had to stop a recent showing of *Bride of Chucky* due to the numerous

laser distractions. “I shut off the movie and went down into the auditorium and told the audience that they were not in their living room,” says Zajicek. The NFL says it may consider a ban at all stadiums next year. Even the WWF has fallen victim to the little red dots. Says Buzz Huber, events manager at the Frank Erwin Center in Austin, Tex.: “It’s rampant at wrestling events. It’s way out of control.”



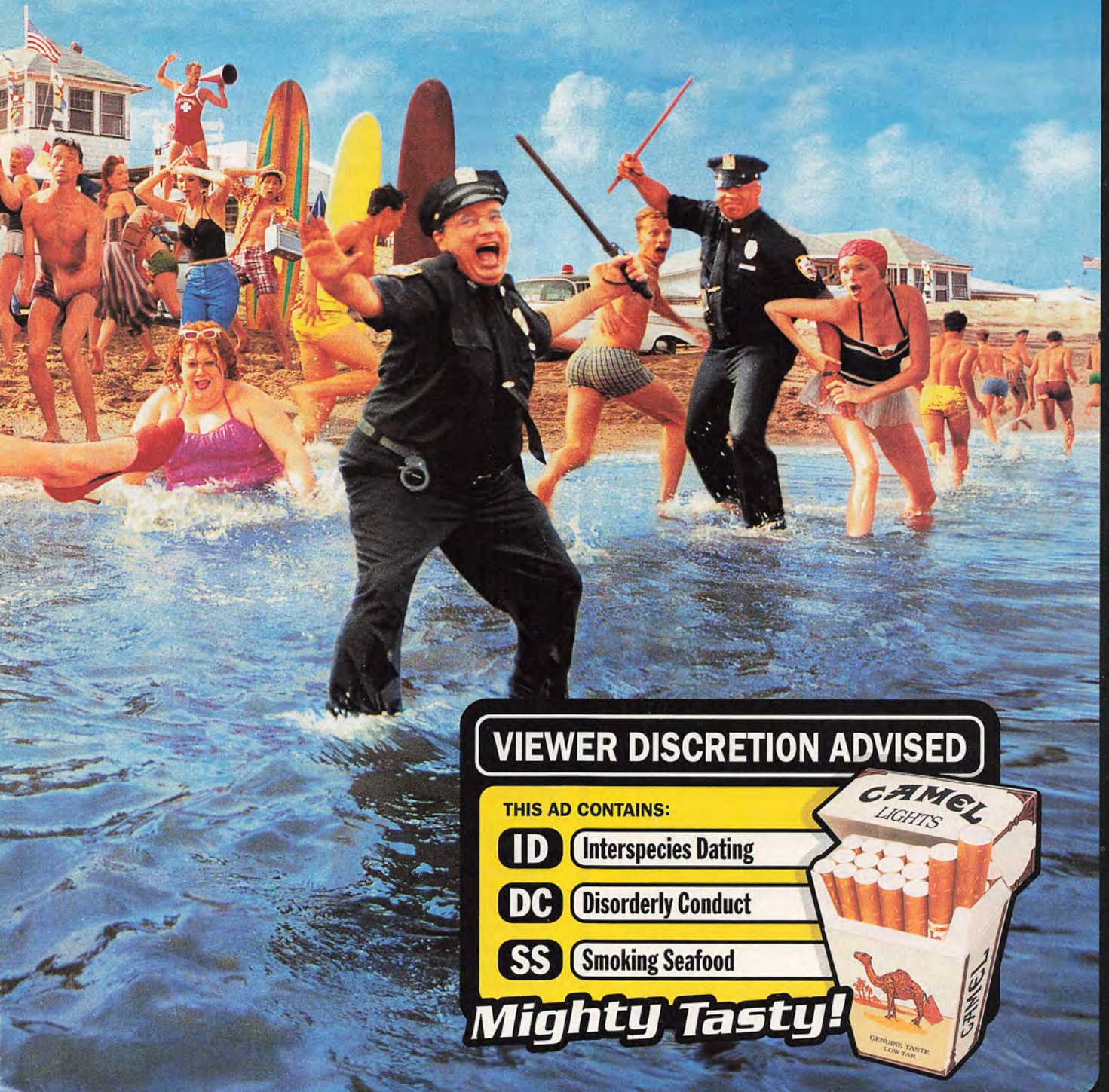
Some observers trace the laser boom to the penultimate episode of *Seinfeld*, which had George Costanza being victimized by a laser-pointer wielder. Taking their cue from the laughs elicited by George’s nemesis, teens picked up the laser baton. Several cities, including New York, have since banned the sale of the devices to minors. And some of the targets are even fighting back. At a Nov. 30 **Kiss** concert in New Jersey, drummer **Peter Criss** caught a beam in the eye, prompting band mate **Paul Stanley** to berate the crowd. Since then, Stanley has taken up the anti-laser crusade. “If any of those [users] want to come on stage,” he says, “I’ll do them a service only a proctologist could do. There’s a new sheriff in town, and he wears eight-inch heels.” —Will Lee

CAMEL



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HOTSheet

What the country is talking about this week...

- 1 **New Year's resolution** To be more positive and less sarcastic. Yeah, right.
- 2 **Champagne** Wine merchants predict there won't be enough bubbly to go around on New Year's Eve, 1999. It's called the "Y1Case?" problem.
- 3 **Terminator 3** Arnold Schwarzenegger may agree to make another sequel. The android comes back from the future to stop them from making *Babe: Pig in the City*.
- 4 **Sean Penn** He's going to stop acting in Hollywood movies. That didn't hurt Jean-Claude Van Damme's career.



5 **Bob Dole** He's become an official spokesperson for Viagra. But what politicians really want is a drug that will help raise *money*.

6 **E.T.** The cuddly extra-terrestrial will appear in a "Buckle Up, America" safe-driving campaign. Remember, never go faster than the speed of light—it's the law!

7 **7-Eleven** The convenience store is going to start selling fancy

wines. Like Thunderbird '62 and Boone's Farm '84.

8 **The Judds** The mother-daughter duo are reuniting for a TV special. And then another two-year-long "farewell tour."

9 **Year-in-review shows** They're easy to produce. You just run that clip of Monica hugging Bill over and over.

10 **Olympic scandals** Some host cities have been accused of giving improper gifts to IOC officials. But in the Olympic spirit, the best bribes always won.

11 **Dog-fur coats** It turns out that some jackets made in China weren't what they were labeled. Buyer beware: Real coyote coats don't have flea collars.

12 **The euro** The new currency that can be used in Paris, Rome, and Madrid. It's a McDonald's gift certificate.

13 **Mighty Joe Young** A giant gorilla is forced to perform in an inhumane sideshow. They make him play pro hockey.

14 **Larry Flynt** A real patriot. He's doing for free what it cost Ken Starr \$40 million to do.

15 **Fire ants** The killer insects have arrived in Southern California. They want to try some trendy food for a change.

Time Bandits

IT USED TO BE THAT THE MOST difficult part of taping your favorite TV show was figuring out how to set the VCR clock. But now there's something more confusing: determining when the show actually *starts*. Recently, we've suspected that the networks have been cheating a bit on start times, a suspicion that began when we noticed our



tapes were cutting off the beginnings of programs. To test our theory, we checked the beginning times of a random sampling of shows during the month of December against the Master Clock of the United States, the country's standard timepiece. The results? Just as we thought: Some of the Big Four are beginning several of their sitcoms and dramas ahead of schedule, anywhere from a few seconds to over a minute early (see chart). Our informal survey found NBC and Fox jumping the gun most frequently, while ABC was the most punctual.

What's going on? While ABC's senior vice president of program planning and scheduling, Jeff Bader, says he hasn't noticed a problem, he has a few theories: "Maybe they're trying to get a jump [on the other shows]. Or maybe they want 30 seconds more promo time in a higher-rated show." NBC and CBS pool-pooh those ideas; Fox declines to comment. "I wish I had some big secret to share with you," says an NBC spokesman, "but it really is as simple as a program occasionally coming in long or short and we [have to] juggle a little bit." A CBS spokesman says: "You never want to confuse your viewer. They're trained to tune in on the hour." So for now, frequent tapers may just have to relearn how to set their VCR clocks—this time, a few minutes ahead. —Kristen Baldwin

the times are a-changin'



SHOW	AIRDATE	START TIME*	EARLY BY...
<i>That '70s Show</i> (Fox)	12/6	8:28:55	65 secs.
<i>ER</i> (NBC)	12/10	9:59:00	60 secs.
<i>L.A. Doctors</i> (CBS)	12/7	9:59:00	60 secs.
<i>That '70s Show</i>	12/13	8:29:05	55 secs.
<i>Frasier</i> (NBC)	12/3	8:59:15	45 secs.
<i>Just Shoot Me</i> (NBC)	12/3	9:29:15	45 secs.
<i>The Simpsons</i> (Fox)	12/6	7:59:15	45 secs.
<i>Frasier</i>	12/10	8:59:30	30 secs.
<i>The Simpsons</i>	12/13	7:59:30	30 secs.
<i>Cosby</i> (CBS)	12/7	7:59:45	15 secs.

* All times Eastern standard as measured by the Master Clock of the United States

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FLASHES

It's less than a year away. What are your plans for December 31, 1999?

SEAN "PUFFY" COMBS I'm having a big party in Miami.

VICKI LEWIS (*NewsRadio*) I plan to blow up Bill Gates' computer.

SETH GREEN (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) I'm going to get a pedicure and spend time in a sensory-deprivation tank contemplating what I can do to kill the Y2K bug.

PORTIA DE ROSSI (*Ally McBeal*) I'm from Australia,

so my friends and I are going to the middle of Australia to sit on a lot of dry, flat earth and drink beer.

IAN MCKELLEN (*Gods and Monsters*) I've discussed all sorts of options, including seeing the millennium at Mount Everest. But I live half a mile from the longitude line in Greenwich [England], where there will be all sorts of festivities. So it seems a bit perverse not to spend it there.

F. GARY GRAY (director, *The Negotiator*) Staying away from New York so I can live to see the millennium. It's going to be a nuthouse in Times Square.

MICKY DOLENZ Probably trying to keep my computer from crashing.

DANNY MASTERTON (*That '70s Show*) I'll be naked the entire day.

CHRIS TUCKER I'm going to church. Seriously.

EDWARD FURLONG (*American History X*) I want to go to New Orleans and get a room on



FUTURESPEAK Making plans big, small, and otherwise for millennium's eve are Everett (1), Tyler (2), Combs (3), and De Rossi (4)

Bourbon Street. Or maybe in New York. And definitely getting wasted.

LIV TYLER My godmother lives in New Orleans in the French Quarter. She has a big beautiful costume party every year, so I might do that.

JOHN HENTON (*The Hughleys*) I'll be getting away from anything with a [computerized] timer on it.

WIM WENDERS A movie sounds nice. But I wonder if they will be showing anything that night.

ROBERTO BENIGNI (*Life Is Beautiful*) In Rome at the Jubilee 2000 with the Pope. It should be a big Pope party. Everyone who is supposed to go to heaven is invited.

HOWIE MANDEL It's tough to make plans, but I'm definitely going to have lunch. Then I'm going to work around that.

SANDRA BERNHARD Rock the sh--!

JERRY SPRINGER I was around at the turn of the last millennium, so hopefully I'll have as good of a time for this one. Seriously, I'd love to have a blowout show with our most outrageous guests.

RUPERT EVERETT I want to be in an airplane. But all of the computers are changing, so I could crash. [The millennium's] important, though; it'll determine the rest of your life.

MICHAEL CAINE We're [he and wife Shakira] going to spend the millennium at home. Because we're afraid if you have to fly and all the computers go down, you won't be able to get home.

ROB REINER Running for the hills.

<< random quote

"I'm just going to watch my digital watch to see what it does." —JERRY SEINFELD

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Monitor



WEDDINGS Actress

Vivica A. Fox, 34, said "I do" to R&B performer **Christopher Harvest** (a.k.a. Sixx-Nine), 29, Dec. 19, in L.A.



SPLITS Actress Linda

Hamilton, 42, filed for divorce from director **James Cameron**, 44, Dec. 14, in L.A. The couple, who have a daughter, Josephine, 5, made headlines earlier this year after they separated and Cameron began seeing *Titanic* costar Suzy Amis.



WINNERS Charmed

star **Alyssa Milano**, 26, was awarded \$230,000 following a default judgment in her case against website creator **John Lindgren**, 21, Dec. 23, in L.A. In April, Milano filed a complaint against Lindgren for allegedly posting nude photos of her on the Internet. Milano's attorney, Mitchell Kamarck, says the actress plans to invest the money in safesearching.com, a "Hollywood-friendly" search engine she's created. Lindgren could not be reached for comment.



ARRESTED Rapper Bus-

ta Rhymes, 26, for alleged possession of a weapon, Dec. 27, in New York City. According to police, a loaded gun was found in Rhymes' car after he was stopped for making an unsafe lane change. His business manager, Gerald Odom, 25, was in the car and reportedly charged with marijuana possession. Rhymes and Odom couldn't be reached for comment.



RECOVERING Macaulay

Culkin's clan, including mother Patricia Brentrup and

siblings Dakota, 20, Quinn, 13, Chris, 10, and Rory, 8, after a four-alarm fire erupted in their New York City apartment, Dec. 23. An electric heater was reportedly the source of the blaze. Four tenants died from smoke inhalation, but the Culkins weren't injured. Macaulay, who lives nearby with actress wife Rachel Miner, wasn't in the apartment at the time. A Culkin spokesperson says the family feels "terrible about this tragedy."... Grateful Dead bassist **Phil Lesh**, 58, after liver-transplant surgery, Dec. 17, in Jacksonville, Fla. Lesh was diagnosed with hepatitis C in 1992 and recently began suffering from internal bleeding, prompting the operation. In a posting on the band's official website, Lesh deemed the transplant a "success."



DEATHS Veteran char-

acter actor **Richard Paul**, 58, of cancer, Dec. 25, in L.A. Paul gave a memorable performance as Rev. Jerry Falwell in 1996's *The People vs. Larry Flynt*. His last role is in the upcoming *The Independent*.... Talk-show host **Virginia Graham**, 86, following a heart attack, Dec. 22, in New York City. Graham's nationally syndicated TV shows *Girl Talk* (1963-70) and *The Virginia Graham Show* (1970-72) made her a pioneer of female-oriented programming that featured news, entertainment, and celebrity interviews. She also made frequent appearances as a substitute host on the *Today* show. Her book, prophetically titled *I Love Antiques but I Don't Want to Be One*, is scheduled to be



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Actress **Michelle Thomas**, 30, of stomach cancer, Dec. 22, in New York City. Thomas played Urkel's girlfriend Myra on *Family Matters* for five seasons. Most recently, she starred on the CBS soap *The Young and the Restless*.... Actress **Irene Hervey**, 89, of heart failure, Dec. 20, in Woodland Hills, Calif. A leading lady who played opposite many Hollywood stars in the '30s and '40s, Hervey got her big break as Jimmy Stewart's love interest in 1939's *Destry Rides Again*. In later years she appeared in such films as *Play Misty for Me* and TV shows like *Charlie's Angels*.... Actor **Norman Fell**, 74, of multiple myeloma, Dec. 14, in Woodland Hills, Calif. A veteran of over 35 films, including 1967's *The Graduate*, Fell was best known as libidinous landlord Mr. Roper on the

ABC sitcom *Three's Company* from 1977 to 1979. He left the series to star in the short-lived spin-off *The Ropers*.... British entertainment tycoon **Lew Grade**, 91, of a heart attack, Dec. 13, in London. Grade cofounded Associated Television in 1955, the first British commercial channel to compete with the BBC. He went on to produce such diverse hits as 1973's *The Exorcist*, the 1977 TV miniseries *Jesus of Nazareth*, the syndicated series *The Muppet Show*, and the Oscar-nominated *On Golden Pond*.... English composer **John Addison**, 78, of a stroke, Dec. 7, in Bennington, Vt. Addison won an Oscar for his score of 1963's *Tom Jones* and an Emmy in 1985 for his theme for *Murder, She Wrote*. —Shawna Malcom, with additional reporting by Kristen Baldwin, Suna Chang, Tricia Laine, and Will Lee

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LEMON PLEDGES Did Phillips (left) and Gurland dupe viewers, or are they wrongly accused?

Hazed And Confused

CONTROVERSY After scoring at Sundance, the documentary *Frat House* finds itself caught up in a fraternity row. by Steve Daly

IT'S A CASE THAT WOULD REDUCE STOIC SGT. Joe Friday to tears. You want just the facts? Good luck determining what is or isn't factual about *Frat House*, an HBO-financed one-hour exposé of collegiate hazing that now faces permanent suspension over allegations that it contains staged and otherwise compromised footage. ♦ Largely on the strength of its ferocious, shocking scenes of

hazing abuses, *Frat House* shared a Grand Jury documentary prize at 1998's Sundance Film Festival last January. Judges and festivalgoers were amazed at the lengths to which *Frat*

House's codirectors, Todd Phillips, 28, and Andrew Gurland, 27, had gone to demonstrate how hazing thrives on college campuses despite being illegal in most states. To gain full access to the secret

excesses of pledge "lineups" and *Hell Night*, the filmmakers agreed to "pledge" and are shown doing push-ups in a pukeish substance; Phillips is pelted with beer, tobacco spit, and cigarette ashes while confined in a dog cage.

In the weeks and months after Sundance, the filmmakers' evident capacity for punishment paid off big time. Phillips jumped into directing TV spots for Virgin Cola and Miller Beer, among other clients, got hired to do the rock & roll documentary *Phish vs. The World*, and landed a production deal with Ivan Reitman; Gurland's working on several comedy screenplays.

HBO also basked in the post-Sundance glow, showing its prizewinner to the press at a luncheon and making plans for an August debut. But as midsummer approached, it quietly yanked the film from its schedule, offering little explanation as to why (#444, Aug. 7). Not until Dec. 22 did HBO reps finally drop this bombshell: They

said their own execs have been struggling to disprove a welter of post-Sundance allegations about fakery from students involved in the film, as well as from national fraternity groups outraged at what these students did on camera.

The most serious charge? That the humiliated "pledges" shown in a countdown to *Hell Night* in the film's final third were actually full-fledged brothers of the Alpha Tau Omega house at Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania. According to one Muhlenberg student involved in the filming (he appears on screen, though like all the *Frat House* subjects he's not identified by name), the pledges were not only ringers but *choreographed* ringers. "They told us exactly what to do," claims the student. "They'd call and say, 'We're coming in, like, two hours; think of some stuff we could do.' When it came out as a documentary, I was shocked because [our segment] was all staged. They would retake scenes and everything."

Ironically, it was *Frat House's* Sundance splash—and accounts of Phillips and Gurland's heroics—that brought it to the attention of officers at ATO National, one of the country's largest fraternity organizations. With lawyers in tow, ATO National personnel descended on the Muhlenberg campus in May and took depositions from a number of students. The undergrads told "very consistent" stories of staged events and scenes retaken, according to ATO executive director Wynn Smiley. ATO then

CONTROVERSY

joined forces with officers of the National Interfraternity Conference, which represents 67 Greek organizations, to tell HBO that *Frat House* couldn't be called a documentary about hazing because it didn't involve a real pledge class. ATO reps also contend the frat brothers thought they were acting in some sort of fictional comedy, and that the filmmakers never mentioned their HBO funding. (It should, of course, be noted that the students would have little reason to want to confess to any actual hazing or substance abuse, given the consequences—probable expulsion.)

HBO says it was stunned to hear that Gurland and Phillips, who both interned at HBO, could be on factually shaky ground. Says Sheila Nevins, HBO's senior VP of original programming and exec producer of *Frat House*, "I never questioned it until it was questioned." For one thing, she'd "just seen" *In the Company of Men*, and figured "this must be how men behave.... I've never, ever dealt with anything like this before. Not in 349 films. Where I couldn't trust my producers, never. My producers are my stallions."

In June, following months of phone calls, ATO National and IFC officers held a summit meeting with Nevins and a few other HBO senior personnel in New York and presented what they considered conclusive evidence that the "pledges" in the Muhlenberg footage were anything but. Shortly after this meeting, HBO nixed the August air-date and stepped up its own investigation. Interns logged all outtakes, which Phillips

and Gurland turned over in April at HBO's request—an unusual procedure. The directors had meetings with Nevins and others and were asked to account for several discrepancies.

Unable to sort out the accusations conclusively, HBO execs say they have no choice but to leave the prizewinning film in limbo. "Our reputation is at stake," says Nevins. "It would be great if all the questions went away and we could run this film. But it doesn't look like that will happen.... It's beyond *Rashomon*. There's not three or four stories at odds. There's a hundred and five."

Gurland and Phillips strenuously deny the allegations. "We stand by the accuracy of the movie," Phillips says. Both contend that HBO is looking for "excuses" not to air the film and challenge the credibility of their fraternity critics. "These kids...will say whatever they have to say to get themselves off the hook," says Phillips, speaking in a conference call with Gurland. "We understand why, because...if I was them I'd do the same thing."

But when pressed on the issue of the pledges' true status at ATO during filming, the filmmakers concede these students were not actual pledges. Says Phillips, "That came to light *after* filming.... We didn't ask enough questions [because] we were happy to get the access we got."

As for the issue of staging scenes, Phillips and Gurland will not get into specifics. While categorically denying scenes were coached, they point to the works of such controversial impresarios as Nick Broomfield and Michael Moore, saying "many" docu-

mentaries include reenactments. "So if we did it," Phillips retorts, "we'd be fine to say that." In the opinion of Jonathan Stack, codirector of *The Farm* (which shared the documentary prize with *Frat House*), every "nonfiction" filmmaker wrestles with the question in every shot. He asks: "Is it staging if I've asked a subject to move from the first cell to the third cell because the lighting is better, otherwise I can't capture it

HBO hasn't given them a proper chance to amend it. "So, okay, we'll change the voice-over," Phillips argues. "Tell us what you want, we want the movie to air. Nothing is big enough that it negates the veracity of the film. Trust us." Among their plans, they propose buying *Frat House* back from HBO (Nevins flatly says that won't happen), incorporating changes into it—including all IFC and ATO objections—

THE FRAT IS IN THE FIRE Images of fraternal disorder in *House* include pledges marching semi-naked, being power-sprayed, and enduring Hell Night abuse



on tape? I guess there's all levels of degrees."

Ultimately, Gurland and Phillips insist that these are minor objections that should not detract from the film, which they consider an honest depiction of the hazing ritual. "You should talk to people who've seen the movie and been in a fraternity and ask, 'Is this inaccurate in any f---in' way?'" says Phillips.

What happens next? Sundance officials say they're "too busy" to comment on whether they would rescind *Frat House's* award. Meanwhile, the auteurs insist their movie is fixable—and that

and releasing it as a feature.

"It gets cloudier rather than clearer," Nevins says dejectedly. She feels that Phillips and Gurland "find all this funny. To them it's publicity, and all publicity is good. I find it so sad that they were so close to a truth, and had they tried, they probably could have gotten it by admitting what they were doing to the audience. But they couldn't be honest.... It just ain't up to our standards. You don't get into this college with this kind of transcript." ■ (Additional reporting by Matt Haber and Michael Rapkin)

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than 30 prime-time specials in less than five years—and with shows in the works for ABC, NBC, and Fox—Nash has become the master of what he calls “nonfiction programming.” And while critics may look upon Nash and his ilk as vultures circling over the tube’s vast wasteland, you can’t deny that the guy’s an innovator who, for better or worse, is changing TV. His *Breaking the Magician’s Code: Magic’s Biggest Secrets Finally Revealed* specials broke Fox ratings records, and his recent *When Good Pets Go Bad* brought that network within a rabid cat’s whisker of unseating NBC in the 18–49 demos during the November sweeps.

“A lot of people say that this is schlockumentary programming,” says Nash. “But it’s only schlock if you make it schlock. The challenge is to take the material and make it more than just pictures: Tell a story.” For Nash, that means packaging something like the *World’s Scariest Police Shootouts* so that it highlights the dangers of being a police officer rather than just reveling in the shock of seeing criminals blown away (a policy that has earned him an award from the William H. Parker Police Foundation).

To work his vérité magic, Nash dispatches a staff of 20 (plus legions of freelancers) to negotiate with police departments, private detectives, prisons, local TV stations, and amateur auteurs in an effort to nab the eye-popping footage that makes his specials, well, special. For the upcoming *The Road to Fame*, for example, Nash’s team scoured the audition-

Shock King

BIZ

How Bruce Nash, mastermind of such jaw droppers as *When Good Pets Go Bad*, became top dog in the reality-TV biz. by Joe Flint

BRUCE NASH IS ONE OF TV’S MOST prolific producers, but you won’t see Emmys lining the shelves of his Hollywood office, and the Museum of Television & Radio isn’t exactly itching to honor him with a black-tie dinner. That’s because, unlike traditional industry titans such as David E.

Kelley or Steven Bochco, Nash’s TV kingdom consists of lowbrow reality fare with titles like *World’s Worst Drivers* and the upcoming doozy *Cheating Spouses: Caught on Tape*.

Having cranked out more



GOTTA HAND IT TO HIM Nash's reality-based shows define a genre

tape vaults of every B-level Hollywood casting agent and hit pay dirt—unearthing footage of Tom Cruise and Heather Locklear reading lines together for the 1982-83 TV series *The Powers of Matthew Star*.

Of course, a star-studded tape like that doesn't come cheap; it cost Nash \$10,000. "It's a seller's market and the prices keep going up," says Nash, who now has to fend off network newsmagazines for such diamond-in-the-rough amateur footage. The Cruise-Locklear clip, he promises, is worth every penny. "Something like that can make your show. [After] you see it in the promos, you just have to watch."

Nash certainly doesn't look like a guy who sits around trying to break magicians' codes or expose pro wrestling's greatest secrets. At 51, with an uncanny resemblance to Comedy Central's Dr. Katz, the soft-spoken producer could be mistaken for a geeky bureaucrat. Actually, he *was* a bureaucrat, working as the

director of planning and research at the North Carolina Department of Corrections. An obsession with *TV Guide* and small-screen lore led him to write a boobtube trivia book at age 25. Eighty minutiae-filled books later, Nash found himself in Hollywood producing his first few specials, and when his 1994 ABC event *Before They Were Stars* beat then ratings champ *Murder, She Wrote*, he knew he had finally struck gold.

So how'd he make the leap from those mellow *Stars* specials to *The World's Deadliest Sea Creatures*? According to Nash, he was merely trying to keep up with the if-it-bleeds-it-leads mentality of local news. "The landscape keeps changing, and we have to keep pushing. Reality has to be more dangerous or exploitative or else everyone will say 'I've

seen that,'" says Nash, who admits that five years ago the networks would never have allowed him to air such grisly material as, say, the trailer-park decimation of *World's Deadliest Storms*. As it stands, the only one of Nash's specials that remains too hot for TV is a little gem called *Prisoners Out of Control* (inspired by the classic *Scared Straight*, Nash describes the hour of prison violence as "scared s---less"), which Fox is too skittish to broadcast. Promises Nash, "It will get over a 20 share if they ever air it."

"Bruce has managed to take these things and get credibility where I didn't think there was any," says Mike Darnell, exec VP of specials at Fox, which is one of Nash's biggest customers. According to Darnell, all reality producers "sort of make a pact with the devil"—but while Nash at times has "moral compunctions" about what he's doing, he's still gung ho. "That's what I like about him," says Darnell.

Apparently, that's what NBC likes, too. The network, which used to be highly critical of Nash's Fox

specials, just inked its own deal with him for a 13-episode franchise titled *World's Scariest Videos* set to premiere this spring. "It's a guilty pleasure," says NBC exec VP of event programming John Miller, whose currently NFL-less and NBA-less network is in dire need of a testosterone boost. "And we needed something that could be launched fast and could get the young men we'll lose from basketball."

According to Miller, NBC has only one limitation on what's depicted in Nash's outrageous videos: "No-body can die."

That's fine with Nash, who *does* (believe it or not) draw the anything-to-shock line at showing deaths ("unlike *60 Minutes*," he jokes). In fact, Nash even makes a point of alternating his violence-prone specials with lighter fare like the magician-secrets and wrestling shows. "At one time, we were working on police shoot-outs and the prison show. It was too much. I don't mind playing Darth Vader," he says, "as long as I can also play Luke Skywalker." ■



HYPER REALITY Evolving from tame celeb bloopers, "caught on tape" specials have become a bazaar of shoot-outs, car crashes, and biting beasts (above)

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by DAVID
HOCHMAN

Wherefore art thou
Oscar? A look at how
SHAKESPEARE
IN LOVE's
Gwyneth Paltrow
and other gold seekers
navigate the tempest.

photograph by
NORMAN JEAN ROY

W

HAT IS THE SOUND OF OSCAR BUZZING? ♦ It's the sort of answerless question best pondered by Lao-tzu or Roger Ebert. But by our estimation, it is the crash of a coffee cup dropped by a busboy in a West Hollywood café after Gwyneth Paltrow strolls in to be interviewed about her much-fussed-over new period comedy, *Shakespeare in Love*. It's the predawn announcement of six Golden Globe nominations for *Shakespeare*, including Best Picture, best director, best screenplay, and Best Actress for Paltrow. It's the absence of sounds—no coughing, no chattering, and, amazingly, no snoring—at the Los Angeles screenings of *Shakespeare in Love* for members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. It's the giggling of women on *The View* going gaga over Joseph Fiennes (Ralph Fiennes' 28-year-old younger brother), who plays the dashing young playwright himself.

It's Hillary Clinton announcing at the *Shakespeare* premiere in New York that the film has lured her into a movie theater for the first time in five years. And this amid her husband's impeachment inquiries!

Now, on a balmy mid-December afternoon in Los Angeles, Oscar buzz has been transmogrified into the faint rustling of a napkin in the trembling hands of an autograph-seeking teenager named Lana, who, with her father, has spotted Paltrow being interviewed for this story at a sidewalk table outside La Bottega Marino on Santa Monica Boulevard. Lana is too bedazzled to say much, but her British father rambles about how "dead-on" Paltrow's English accents are in *Shakespeare in Love*, *Sliding Doors*, and *Emma*; how "absolutely exquisite" she looks in period costume; and how the 25-year-old California-born, Manhattan-bred actress is pretty much the best thing to happen to corsets since titanium underwire.

"I notice that people shake more lately," Paltrow admits, after they walk away. "That didn't use to happen, but I definitely sense a little extra shakiness." Paltrow should get used to it, since even bigger jitters could be just around the corner. In a year with surprisingly few Oscar nomination shoo-ins, *Shakespeare in Love* seems uniquely primed for Academy Award success. Paltrow is certainly in the running for a Best Actress nomination. The director, John Madden, nominated last year for *Mrs. Brown*, stands to get a nomination here, too. And so does Dame Judi Dench, whose scene-stealing, roughly eight-minute pancake-makeup performance as Queen Elizabeth may be, if she won the Oscar, the briefest Academy Award-worthy role ever. If nothing else, *Shakespeare* is virtually guaranteed nominations for art direction and costume design, as well as a nod for Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman's highly literate, joyously

intricate screenplay about an imaginary romance that inspired Shakespeare to write *Romeo and Juliet*.

"To create something of that magnitude," Stoppard explains, "he was no doubt hopelessly and desperately in love with a very, very special woman." With daring flashes of anachronism (check out the scene with the pub waiter straight out of '90s L.A. offering daily specials like "pig's foot marinated in juniper berry vinegar served on a buckwheat pancake"), the film begins with the young Shakespeare suffering a frustrating writer's block. Enter Paltrow as Viola De Lesseps, an aristocrat who dons a mustache and manly swagger, infiltrates an all-male theatrical troupe, and becomes—when she puts her dress back on—the playwright's muse.

At the moment, however, the muse in question is shrewdly trying to be modest about *Shakespeare in Love*'s Oscar potential. "It's not really something I think about," Paltrow says. "Sure, as a kid, you're like, 'Wow, I wonder what that would be like to be nominated or to win?' But I never did the 'Thank you' thing in front of the mirror, and it's certainly not a goal. If it was, I would be in need of some serious psychotherapy."

If that's true, some of the people at Miramax are definitely due for a little couch time. The goal of landing Oscar nominations for *Shakespeare* has become an almost obsessive preoccupation for The Little Studio That Could And Usually Does. And now, after amassing a total of 110 Oscar nods for such films as *The Piano*, *The Crying Game*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Il Postino*, *Sling Blade*, *The English Patient*, and *Good Will Hunting*, Miramax—closing out its most profitable year yet with profits up nearly 80 percent over last year—is focusing a good portion of its Oscar attention on *Shakespeare*. "It's our movie," says Miramax boss Harvey Weinstein. "The reactions are gigantic.



FIENNES



DENCH



AFFLECK

Everybody walks in thinking watching something Shakespeare-related is like visiting the dentist. But they walk out going 'Hey, I really love this stuff.'

So between now and Feb. 9, when the Academy Award nominations are announced live, the Miramax Machine, as the studio's campaign engine has become known, will make much ado about everything to convince the more than 5,000 members of the Motion Picture Academy that the Bard is beautiful. How that happens exactly is a study in shrewd schmoozing, boundless breast-beating, and more than a little Shakespearean showmanship. "The word is *aggressive*," Weinstein says. "We're aggressive in presenting movies, in getting Academy members to the screenings, and in getting the word out, particularly in cases like this, where it's not an easy sell."

PALTROW LOOKS ANYTHING BUT AGGRESSIVE as she hugs her knees and coyly tucks her platinum hair behind her ears during her interview, but it's all part of Miramax's grand promotional plan. After starring in four movies for the studio in the last couple of years, with another—*The Talented Mr. Ripley*, opposite Matt Damon—on the way, Paltrow has cultivated the sort of relationship with Miramax not seen in the movie business since the years of the studio system. Paltrow is to Miramax what Judy Garland was to MGM. Or, as Weinstein overstates it, "She runs my company." And talk about great expectations: "You look at the work of Katharine Hepburn and people like that," Weinstein says, "and you can see that Gwyneth has the talent to be one of them, one of the greats. She can do anything."

"In the beginning of my career, everybody else seemed like a complete Hollywood phony," Paltrow says, "but Harvey handed me scripts and said, 'I want to work with you.' But, you know, if I want to pay rent, eventually I have to do another movie somewhere else." It's tricky, though. "I live in New York and all the studio people I know are there," she says. "I don't know Hollywood studio people."

If Weinstein has his way, their relationship will be consummated on the evening of March 21 with at least two gold statues bearing witness—one for *Shakespeare* itself, the other for Paltrow as Best Actress. She is, in fact, at the center of the studio's Academy push, which began, unofficially, last summer. After the *Shakespeare* proposal languished at Universal, where Julia Roberts was attached to star, Miramax gambled \$4.5 million to acquire the project (more than the budget of many Miramax films) with Paltrow in mind. Just weeks into shooting last spring in England, it became clear that Paltrow was proving more than a worthy substitute for Roberts. Screenwriter Norman recalls watching some footage with Ben Affleck, Paltrow's real-life love interest, who does a self-satirizing cameo in the movie as a big-egoed actor with a cool-guy goatee. "Ben was in the editing room watching Gwyneth's performance," Norman says, "and he said to the

OPPOSITE SPREAD: AGENCY: EDDIE STYING: SHIRLEY PATRICK/STOCKLAND; MAKEUP: JEFF FRANCIS; BRISTOL GUNNY; MAKEUP: SCOTT BAKER; SHIRT: LEROUX; HAIR: JAMES; COLETTE BAUDOU; (THIS PAGE) NIGEL PARSONS



THIS YEAR'S BEST ACTOR RACE should provide the most interesting mix of Academy faces old and new. Two-time winner **TOM HANKS** ought to earn his fourth nomination, for leading the ensemble of *Saving Private Ryan*. Also virtual locks are the year's top two critical honorees: New York Film Critics Circle winner **NICK NOLTE** (last nominated for 1991's *The Prince of Tides*) for his slow burn as a paranoid New England sheriff in *Affliction* (any votes he gets for *The Thin Red Line* will likely be in the supporting-actor category), and the never-nominated *Gods and Monsters* star **IAN MCKELLEN**, whose performance as gay film director James Whale has won citations from the L.A. critics and the National Board of Review.

The other two slots aren't sewn up yet: Golden Globe nominee **JIM CARREY** would certainly be a viable choice for his dramatic departure in *The Truman Show*—if actors can stomach bestowing a nomination on a comedian who already makes \$20 million a picture. **MICHAEL CAINE** could earn his fifth nomination as *Little Voice*'s sleazeball agent, though that role might be considered too small to deserve a Best Actor nod. **STEPHEN FRY** and **BRENDAN GLEESON** have also won early kudos for their titular performances in *Wilde* and *The General*, respectively, but their indie turns are in danger of getting lost among heaps

Best Actor

of Academy tapes and higher-profile releases. As the Bard in *Shakespeare in Love*, **JOSEPH FIENNES** might ride the film's wave, but he was the only main cast member who didn't score a Globe nomination. Four-time nominee **ROBIN WILLIAMS** has a popular hit with *Patch Adams*, but critics say he's played a winsomely

for your CONSIDERATION

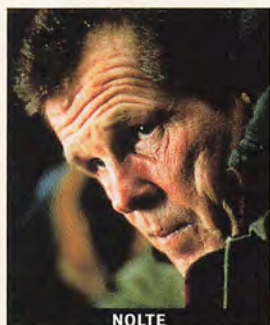


He buffed up monumentally to play a neo-Nazi skinhead whose past catches up with him; he recites hateful diatribes with utmost conviction; and, when arrested for murder, he serves up the scariest facial expression of the year. Hello? What's everybody missing here?

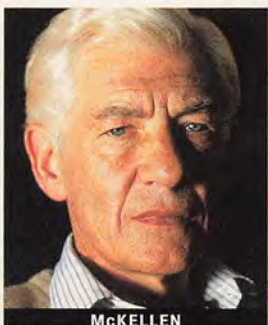
To forget **EDWARD NORTON** in *American History X* is to overlook the most mesmerizing screen performance of 1998.

clowning man-child once too often. And **JOHN TRAVOLTA** is considered a possibility for *A Civil Action*, but his Golden Globe nomination for *Primary Colors* might split the vote and effectively kill his chances.

That leaves two candidates who directed themselves: *Life Is Beautiful* star **ROBERTO BENIGNI** and Academy fave **WARREN BEATTY** (*Bugsy*, *Reds*, *Heaven Can Wait*, *Bonnie and Clyde*), who turned in one of his most daring roles to date as *Bulworth*'s rapping senator. The movie may have stiffed, but don't underestimate its star: Like *Bulworth*, he knows how to get out the vote.



NOLTE



MCKELLEN



BEATTY



BENIGNI



HANKS

editor, 'Man, I live with this chick, and I don't know how she's doing this stuff.'"

Last August, Miramax compiled a 40-minute reel of *Shakespeare* and screened it for select members of the media to generate advance buzz and declare its confidence in the movie. "Our biggest problem with the film was the Shakespeare stigma," Weinstein says. "I used to go to those plays on school field trips and make out, if I was lucky, with a girlfriend or watch somebody else make out with their girlfriend. Anything but listening to the show. That's why we need to tell people, this Shakespeare is hip, it's fun, it's brilliant." Weinstein's clearly come full circle. "I really like Shakespeare now," he continues. "Shakespeare's sexy!"

When the entire movie was shown at a Manhattan press junket Nov. 21, the response was almost as giddy as press reactions can get. At this point, Miramax was ready to give it the full Oscar treatment. "An early benchmark of an Academy-campaign movie," says Tony Angellotti, who's helping Miramax with their Oscar campaign, "is when journalists who weren't at a screening call up the next day and say, 'Hey, why wasn't I invited?' That was happening like crazy with this screening of *Shakespeare*." Says Fiennes (who also donned tights in last year's *Elizabeth*): "My telephone suddenly started to ring a lot more with requests for interviews."

Miramax immediately scheduled screenings for Academy members and began preparing print and television ads touting the movie as a period romance for the '90s—an attempt to capitalize on the success of that other period romance, *Titanic*. At least one Miramax publicist has referred to *Shakespeare* as "this year's *English Patient*," though such direct comparisons sometimes backfire. For a while, they were calling *The Mighty* this year's *Good Will Hunting*. (It wasn't.)

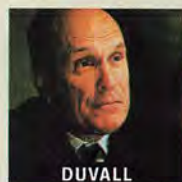
After the lavish premiere (attended by the First Lady, who was personally invited by Weinstein), the movie's limited Dec. 11 opening was greeted with raves that singled out Paltrow for what *The New York Times* called "her first great, fully realized starring performance." The Miramax Machine kicked into high gear.



Best Supporting Actor

THE SECRET TO SCORING a supporting-actor nomination this year? Get ugly. Virtually all of this year's top competitors threw vanity to the wind before stealing their scenes. For starters, there's **BILLY BOB THORNTON** as an unrecognizable hillbilly in *A Simple Plan*, a role that's already won him kudos from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association. Similarly, 1996 Best Actor victor **GEOFFREY RUSH** sports rotting teeth in *Shakespeare in Love*, a much showier (and therefore more nominatable) performance than his vicious turn in *Elizabeth*. **BILL MURRAY**'s pallid, paunchy loser millionaire in *Rushmore* is a career-altering performance that's garnered L.A. and New York critics' awards. Even the usually knee-weakening **ED HARRIS** (a past nominee for *Apollo 13*) hides under an unsightly beret as the godlike producer of *The Truman Show*.

Other impressively unappealing contenders include **DONALD SUTHERLAND** as a crusty track coach in *Without Limits* (though its horrible box office hurts his chances), *Waking Ned Devine*'s bony nude moped rider **DAVID KELLY**, **DYLAN BAKER** as *Happiness*' child molester, and shouting soldiers **NICK NOLTE** (*The Thin Red Line*) and **TOM SIZEMORE** (*Saving Private Ryan*). Only *Pleasantville* dad **WILLIAM H. MACY**, who rode the dastardly thing to a nomination for *Fargo*, has a shot in an upright role. But the edge goes to **ROBERT DUVALL**'s ugly-on-the-inside lawyer in *A Civil Action*; he could earn his sixth nomination from voters who feel he was robbed of a statue for *The Apostle* last year (though he did win the Best Actor prize for 1983's *Tender Mercies*).



DUVALL



MURRAY



THORNTON



RUSH



HARRIS



for your CONSIDERATION

We know it's tricky to single out one of *Saving Private Ryan*'s supporting grunts. There's the danger of vote splitting (and besides, they're all so damn good). So we'll make it easy for you. In an epic filled with high-decibel scenes, soft-spoken **JEREMY DAVIES**, as the bookish, cowardly Corporal Upham, is the character who most sticks with you. Six months later, we still can't shake the memory of his stairway meltdown.



Best Actress

arrival performance that won the admiration of even those who didn't like the movie, while Paltrow, who probably just missed a nomination for 1996's *Emma*, is due for her first.

Our hunch is that this year, cancer and corsets have the edge. But there are a few other contenders: **JANE HORROCKS**, whose *Little Voice* turn comes with an impressive singing-in-tongues

OF ALL THIS YEAR'S major Oscar races, the contest for Best Actress is probably the murkiest; you know the planets are misaligned when the New York Film Critics Circle announces that in its collective opinion, 1998's master thespian was **CAMERON DIAZ** in *There's Something About Mary*. But maybe the award makes a perverse kind of sense; after all, at least Diaz's performance was one of a kind. The rest of this year's Best Actress contenders come in pairs—the kind of twosomes that tend to cancel each other out.

Let's start with the Cancer Divas, **SUSAN SARANDON** in *Stepmom* and **MERYL STREEP** in *One True Thing*. Both are Oscar veterans (they've got 15 nominations and 3 statuettes between them) who outshone their younger costars; Streep's movie got far better reviews, while Sarandon's found a much bigger audience. Both would be respectable, unsurprising nominees. But Americans don't have a cinematic monopoly on suffering valiantly through serious illness; this year's Brit version of the Streep-Sarandon face-off pits *The Theory of Flight*'s **HELENA BONHAM CARTER** (plucky virgin with motor-neuron disease) against *Hilary and Jackie*'s **EMILY WATSON** (brilliant musician with multiple sclerosis). And all four women will face stiff competition from the Corset Cuties, **CATE BLANCHETT** in *Elizabeth* and **GWYNETH PALTROW** in *Shakespeare in Love*. Blanchett's is the kind of major

for your CONSIDERATION



Awkward age? What awkward age? We haven't seen a child actress blossom so beautifully since Jodie Foster. In the *Addams Family* movies, **CHRISTINA RICCI**, now 18, wowed us with her cherubic but devilish charm. This year, in *The Opposite of Sex*, her perfectly calculated performance

as a scheming young woman desperate *not* to be loved proves she's still got it—along with so much sexy menace that frankly, we'd be scared *not* to nominate her.

gimmick, **ALLY SHEEDY**'s grim comeback performance in *High Art*, and *Living Out Loud*'s **HOLLY HUNTER** and *Beloved*'s **OPRAH WINFREY**, who would both be stronger candidates if their movies had had more staying power. Instead, the Academy may reserve a slot for a new (or rather, gloriously used) face, 69-year-old **FERNANDA MONTENEGRO** in the Brazilian *Central Station*. So, despite the critical kudos, Diaz can probably stay home on Oscar night, comfort herself with *Mary*'s grosses...and wash her hair.



STREEP



SARANDON



MONTENEGRO



PALTROW



BLANCHETT

With Academy ballots going out Jan. 8 and due back Jan. 29, the studio will try to wow voters with the film's commercial appeal by expanding *Shakespeare's* release. Echoing its winning strategy on *Good Will Hunting*, Miramax took *Shakespeare* from 6 screens to 200 on Christmas Day and will up the number to 800 Jan. 8. Meanwhile, the video copies of *Shakespeare in Love* that normally would have gone out to Academy members in mid-December were held until after New Year's, in an effort to encourage Oscar voters to see the movie at private screenings in small, comfortable theaters with high-tech acoustics. During voting season, the studio only books screenings in theaters with convenient parking.

Nobody's selling the film harder than Paltrow. On Dec. 11, she made the *Today* show's Matt Lauer blush

with stories about the prosthetic bean bag she wore betwixt the thighs to pass as a man in the movie. She talked turkey on a Thanksgiving-eve *Late Show With David Letterman*. She taught Rosie how to proffer a proper English accent. She even spent an entire afternoon pasting on fake mustaches for a cross-dressing sketch on *The Tonight Show*. "I'm so sick of myself and my boring voice and my stupid sound bites," Paltrow says, laughing. "This is the last cover of a magazine I am doing until I'm 30."

FOR PALTROW, A RESPITE from the spotlight might not be such a bad idea. Beautiful, blond, talented, and to the manor born—her parents are showbiz royalty Bruce Paltrow and Blythe Danner—she's the kind of person you could love to hate. (In fact, she was snubbed in her own hometown last month when the New York Film Critics Circle handed its 1998 Best Actress honor to the seemingly more lovable Cameron Diaz.) Add to that intelligent costume dramas, romances with Brad Pitt and Affleck, and she sounds too good to be true.

To Paltrow's credit, however, she's now being less vocal about her love life. "I said things about being in a rela-



Best Supporting Actress



KUDROW



ALLEN



BATES



DENCH



REDGRAVE

AND WHAT WE'RE MOST looking forward to is...the celebrity death match between **JUDI DENCH** and **LISA KUDROW**. Dench missed her opportunity to take home a statue last year for playing Queen Victoria in *Mrs. Brown*, but she'll have another shot as Queen Elizabeth in *Shakespeare in Love*; she's already got a Golden Globe nomination and was named supporting actress runner-up by the New York Film Critics Circle. But New York's top honor went to Kudrow, the *Friends* veteran who turned heads as a comically embittered schoolmarm in *The Opposite of Sex*, so let the games begin. Also in there fighting: **KATHY BATES**, who was, let's face it, the best thing about *Primary Colors* and has the Globe nomination to prove it; **LYNN REDGRAVE** (*Gods and Monsters*), who's got a Globe nomination and is well liked in Hollywood, even though (or perhaps *because*) she'll never give an acceptance speech as interesting as her sister's; and **JOAN ALLEN** (*Pleasantville*), because it wouldn't be an Oscar race without her (will the third time be the charm?). Voters may also acknowledge *Beloved* with a nomination for either **THANDIE NEWTON** or **KIMBERLY ELISE**; a wave of enthusiasm for *Life Is Beautiful* might sweep **NICOLETTA BRASCHI** along; and **BRENDA BLETHYN**'s Globe nomination for her *Little Voice* performance could get her into the Oscar race (though hers is really more of a leading role). Finally: Never ever underestimate **SHARON STONE**, whose understated turn in *The Mighty* charmed Globe voters. You *know* she's already got the dress picked out.

for your CONSIDERATION

Okay, voters: We know the phrase "lesbian-junkie indie melodrama" may not move *High Art* to the top of your cassette pile. But if you skip it, you'll miss a performance that's not only heartbreaking but laugh-out-loud funny. As a glamorous, grumpy German actress who's so lost in a heroin haze she often falls asleep in the middle of her own sentences, **PATRICIA CLARKSON** does the kind of deadpan, dead-accurate work that makes you want to watch every scene she's in twice. Someone give this woman her own movie—fast.





Best Picture

WELCOME TO FOUR FIFTHS of a really interesting Oscar race. While it's not true that this year's Best Picture ballots will arrive in Academy mailboxes preprinted with the words **SAVING PRIVATE RYAN**, they might as well be: If any doubt remained that Steven Spielberg's World War II epic is this year's front-runner, Best Picture honors from both the New York Film Critics Circle and the Los Angeles Film Critics Association have sealed the deal.

But the battle for the remaining slots could make *Ryan*'s carnage look like a tea party. The contender with the most momentum is **SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE**; its combination of quasi-prestigious subject matter, star power, and lush visuals should give it one of the year's highest nomination totals come Feb. 9. **THE TRUMAN SHOW** seemed a sure bet last summer, then faded when it failed to pick up any major critics' prizes, but it roared back to life when it took six Golden Globe noms (one more than *Ryan*). For the fourth nomination, we're betting on **LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL**; the crowd-pleasing Italian import by cowriter-director-star Roberto Benigni has earned fantastic word of mouth and could become the first film since 1971's *The Emigrants* to win nominations for Best Picture and Best Foreign Language Film.

The contenders for the fifth slot are an awful lot like the top

four: a World War II epic (**THE THIN RED LINE**, which, like the now-all-but-out-of-contention **BELOVED**, may be too self-conscious and solemnly paced for Academy tastes), a TV-versus-reality comedy-drama (**PLEASANTVILLE**, a sort of *Truman* lite), a 16th-century costume romance (**ELIZABETH**, which peaked early and may now be overshadowed by *Shakespeare*), and a sentimental, popular import (Brazil's **CENTRAL STATION**). But Oscar voters may go in a different direction—toward the small-scale gem **GODS AND MONSTERS**, the *Full Monty* wannabe **WAKING NED DEVINE** (our dark-horse candidate), or the wintry **AFFLICTION**. All of which makes for a perfectly fine contest—though last time we looked, Spielberg wasn't even breaking a sweat.

for your CONSIDERATION



Masterful plotting, understatement, visual elegance, and an emotional wallop that leaves you staggering out of the theater. These are virtues worth celebrating in any movie, but they're particularly stunning in a crime thriller.

There's nothing fancy in **A SIMPLE PLAN**—just superb, noose-tightening direction by Sam Raimi and flawless work by Bill Paxton and Billy Bob Thornton, all in the service of one of the year's best scripts. Sure sounds Oscar-worthy to us.



'SAVING PRIVATE RYAN'



'SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE'



'LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL'



'WAKING NED DEVINE'



'THE TRUMAN SHOW'

relationship [with Pitt] that felt wrong to me even as I was saying them," she says. "I was more concerned about hurting the reporter's feelings or coming off as being overly self-protective...but I've realized that absolutely no good can come of my talking about it."

She also says that she'll be choosing projects more carefully. "For a while, I was going along, saying 'Oh, wow, cool, I can be in this movie with, you know, Ethan Hawke, who I like, and it shoots in New York, I'll do it.' But I never really thought deeply about what it would mean in terms of the work.... With a movie like *A Perfect Murder* [last summer's glossy thriller costarring Michael Douglas], my thinking was, this could be one of those movies you watch on Spectravision when you drive up to Santa Barbara for the weekend and get in a hotel and cuddle in bed. That sounded like fun. Looking back, there really wasn't anything to sink my teeth into."

Even before *Shakespeare*, Paltrow had pretty much cornered the market on roles calling for a young American actress who can put on a corset and pull off a British accent—though not always to her own satisfaction. "I'm not crazy about my work in *Emma*," she says. "It wasn't deep enough for me." Another period drama is next: In *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (directed by *The English Patient*'s Anthony Minghella), she plays a wealthy American living in Italy in the 1950s; Damon portrays a killer. After that, she plans to step out of the period pigeonhole. "I just hope that people don't get possessive of me that way," she says. "Like how they get over the sweetheart type of girl. It's hard when you see an actor or actress you respect, like Julia Roberts, continuously being asked to play the same role because that's what the American people demand."

At the moment, at least five other scripts have been connected with her name. "At a certain point, I'll probably work less," she says. "I'd like to take some time off and do normal things. Be a volunteer somewhere. Read poetry. Or have a family. I'd just like to dig in and nest for a while. But I probably won't have to worry about it. They'll probably kick me out of movies before I'm ready to go."

Come now, Paltrow. From the looks of things they like you. They really like you. ■



Best Director

THIS MUCH IS CERTAIN: **STEVEN SPIELBERG**. With a best-director garland from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, a Golden Globe nomination, and his popularity among Academy members, his work on *Saving Private Ryan* makes him not only a shoo-in nominee, but most likely the one who'll go home with his second directing statue on Oscar night. The other four nominations are up for grabs, though a Golden Globe nod bodes well for **JOHN MADDEN** (*Shakespeare in Love*). The same can be said for **PETER WEIR** (*The Truman Show*). Even though *The Thin Red Line* isn't the crowd-pleaser that its war buddy *Saving Private Ryan* was, don't count out **TERRENCE MALICK**, a hero of just about every film-school alum working in Hollywood. (Since the Best Picture and Best Director nominations almost never line up exactly, Malick could be the odd man in.) Keep an eye on **ROBERTO BENIGNI**, especially if the Academy honors his Holocaust comedy, *Life Is Beautiful*, with a Best Picture nomination, and **SAM RAIMI**, the stylish workhorse horror director who's being taken seriously with *A Simple Plan*. Other possibilities include **WARREN BEATTY** (*Bulworth*), one of the most popular men on the Hollywood campus; **SHEKHAR KAPUR**, already lauded by the Globes for *Elizabeth*; **BILL CONDON**, for his quiet craftsmanship on *Gods and Monsters*; **GARY ROSS**, whose high-degree-of-difficulty F/X-heavy work on *Pleasantville* has its share of devotees in Hollywood (despite a surprising snubbing by the Globes); and **JOHN BOORMAN** (*The General*), the runner-up to Spielberg as the Los Angeles critics' favorite director.



BENIGNI



SPIELBERG



MADDEN



MALICK



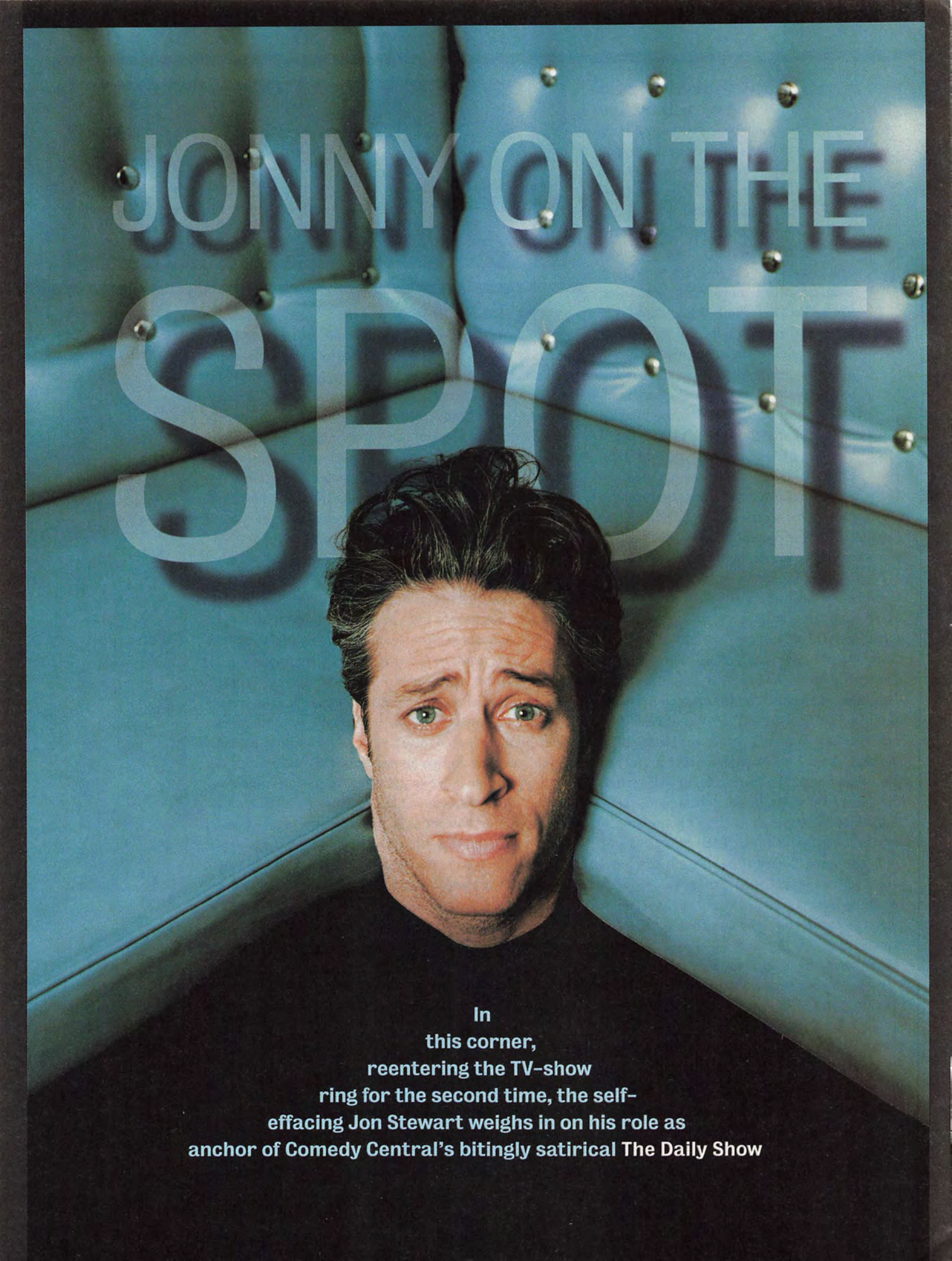
WEIR

for your CONSIDERATION

Dear voters, if you brave the graphic masturbation scenes and pedophilia plotlines of the much-discussed *Happiness*, you'll find images that you've never seen before—and will probably never want to see again. Since TODD SOLONDZ's masterpiece/offensive oddity was dumped by Universal's October Films (the production company Good Machine released it), a nomination for Solondz would acknowledge the noncorporate indie industry and strike a blow for out-there artistry.



JONNY ON THE SPOT

A portrait of Jon Stewart looking upwards with a concerned expression. He is positioned in front of a blue wall that features a large, semi-transparent sign with the words 'JONNY ON THE SPOT' in a bold, sans-serif font. The sign is held in place by several silver pushpins. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting Stewart's face against the blue background.

In
this corner,
reentering the TV-show
ring for the second time, the self-
effacing Jon Stewart weighs in on his role as
anchor of Comedy Central's bitingly satirical *The Daily Show*

Let's examine the career options recently faced by an underemployed stand-up comic named Jon Stewart. There was always the sitcom route. But no. "I never felt I had the right idea," says Stewart. "I'd say to the networks, 'Imagine Mary Tyler Moore with a penis.' And they would, and I couldn't get their attention back." ♦ There were the persistent rumors he'd replace Tom Snyder on CBS' *The Late Late Show*. Nope to that, too. "I'm too short to host a late-night talk show," says the 5'7" Stewart. "It's like the bar at an amusement-park ride. You have to be six foot two or

by A.J.
JACOBS

Photograph by
F. SCOTT
SCHAFFER

over." And wasn't he also heir apparent to Garry Shandling in the latter's late, great HBO series *The Larry Sanders Show*? "Um, that was a little something called *fiction*. Next you'll be asking me if I can twinkle my nose and make Darrin disappear."

So what did Stewart up and do? He threw us a career curveball: Come Jan. 11, the New Jersey-born 36-year-old will take over Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* (the current host of the news-parody program, Craig Kilborn—who does meet the height requirement—departs to replace Snyder). Basic cable? Isn't that small potatoes to a budding movie actor; author of the humor book *Naked Pictures of Famous People*, and former host of the nationally syndicated *Jon Stewart Show*? Uh-uh. Stewart insists he belongs "on the dial somewhere between Animal Planet and the guy in the bee costume on *Sábado Gigante*."

OH, THAT STEWART, THE STRAVINSKY OF SELF-DEPRE- cation. Talk to the chain-smoking comic for a couple hours and he'll discuss everything from his overabundance of body hair (he has to shave his neck) to the new petite desk they had to install on the *Daily Show* set ("looks like doll's house furniture").

So it's left to his new bosses to do the boasting. "To us, Jon's the second coming," praises Comedy Central executive VP of programming Eileen Katz.

Well, he's certainly the net's biggest star to date (that is, if you don't count the talking poop on *South Park*). And to snag him, they offered a godlike deal: time off to moonlight in the movies (he's in the sci-fi thriller *The Faculty* and the upcoming Sean Connery-starring drama *Playing by Heart*); his name in the title (it's now called *The Daily Show With Jon Stewart*); and an astronomical-for-cable salary—about \$1.5 million a year. "The overall budget of Comedy Central has now been drastically reduced," says *Daily Show* cocreator and exec producer Madeleine Smithberg. "Chef from *South Park* will have to go on a diet."

If you must take food out of the mouths of cartoon culinary types, *The Daily Show's* at least a worthwhile

cause. The series ("the most important show ever," the promos trumpet with the show's typically snide irony) mixes celeb interviews, quips about the headlines, and on-the-street segments mocking John Q. Oddball (victims include Christian clowns and a woman who searches for leprechauns). With ratings shooting up 90 percent since *Daily's* 1996 debut, that's what you call a recipe for success. Don't, therefore, expect the ingredients to change much beyond a few tweaks. Though you might not be seeing Kilborn's signature bit, the goofy, celeb-rattling Five Questions (Kilborn—who cracks that he's leaving Stewart "a phone book to sit on"—hopes to whisk them off to CBS), Stewart's got his own gimmick, the Four Questions From Passover Seder ("Why is this guest different from all other guests?").

He kids, but one thing's for sure: This host is different from the previous host. Kilborn—like fellow Central grad Bill Maher before him—plays up the smug-guy's guy shtick, a persona that earned him a PR debacle last year when *Esquire* quoted him making lewd comments about *Daily Show* cocreator Lizz Winstead. Contrast that with Stewart's sweet, ironic mensch vibe. "Jon's the kid Craig probably beat up every day in fifth grade," says head writer Chris Kreski.

So while we may see fewer of *The Daily Show's* cruelest jabs (like the whopper about Alzheimer's-stricken Reagan "talking to a mailbox"), the sharp-witted Stewart undoubtedly will fill in any holes; unlike Kilborn, he writes a lot of his own material. "I think the first two to three months are gonna probably be a little shaky, until we get our stride," admits Stewart. Indeed, Stewart's debut comes shortly after the departure of two of the show's popular correspondents—Brian Unger and A. Whitney Brown. But those behind the scenes are unconcerned: "I think if you take *The Daily Show* and add Jon Stewart, whatever comes out of the microwave at the end of a minute will be tasty," says Smithberg. "I'm just not sure whether it's a taco or a pizza." ■



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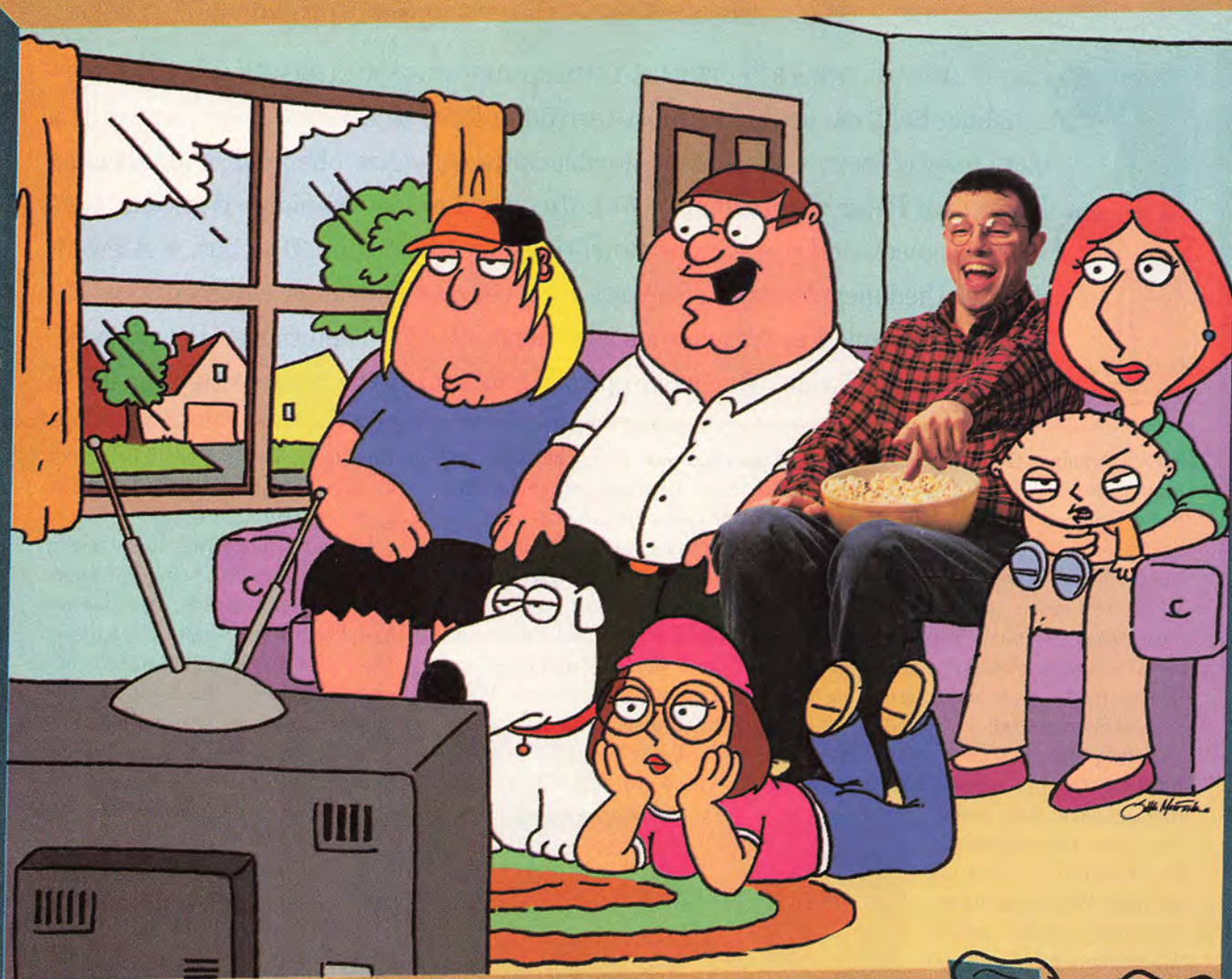
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THE GO-TO

Can 25-year-old Seth MacFarlane hit a homer for Fox with his *Simpsons*esque 'toon *Family Guy*?

GUY

by
Tom
Russo

FORGET ABOUT THE TREE-TRUNK-LIMBED DEFENSIVE LINEMEN AND THE LIP-synching halftime acts—the most terrifying force this Super Bowl Sunday is a baby named Stewie. The enfant terrible is the youngest offspring of lunkheaded Everyman Peter Griffin, star of *Family Guy*, Fox's new animated sitcom that's scored the coveted post-Super Bowl time slot for its Jan. 31 debut. ♦ A swaddling-clothed megalomaniac, Stewie's got a voice as sinister as *The Simpsons*' Mr. Burns' and a mind as treacherous as a Bond villain's. Then there's Peter's wise-cracking pooch, Brian, who in one episode gets sent to the pound, where he lies in

his cell thumbing through a dog-eared copy of *Barely Legal Bitches*. A Pillsbury Doughboyish creature also makes a *Family* cameo, cursing like a *South Park* refugee. And in a scene in which the Griffins veg in front of the tube, they witness *Murder, She Wrote*'s Jessica Fletcher revealing a secret past—as a poster girl for Planned Parenthood.

Before these bits managed to limbo their way past network censors (and the good-taste police) they were dancing around the brain of 25-year-old animator Seth MacFarlane. Practically a baby himself, MacFarlane just locked up a decidedly grown-up \$2.5 million-a-year production deal with Fox.

Not a bad haul, considering it's sparked by a 'toon that began as a project from MacFarlane's undergrad days at the Rhode Island School of Design. "I was still figuring out what I wanted to do within animation," he says. "And it's funny, because it was either that or a sci-fi cartoon. But economically, the whole tactless-guy thing seemed to be the way to go."

After graduating from RISD in '95, MacFarlane moved to L.A. and got a gig at animation giant

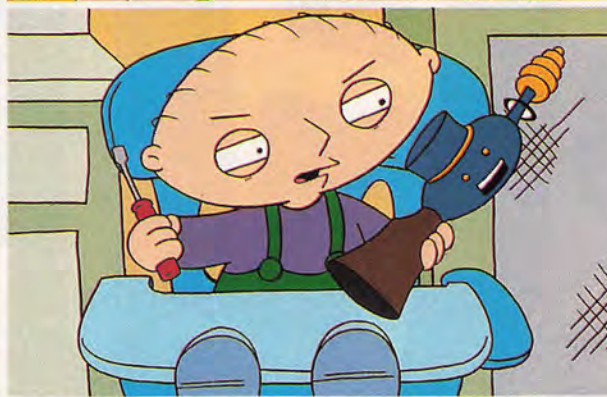
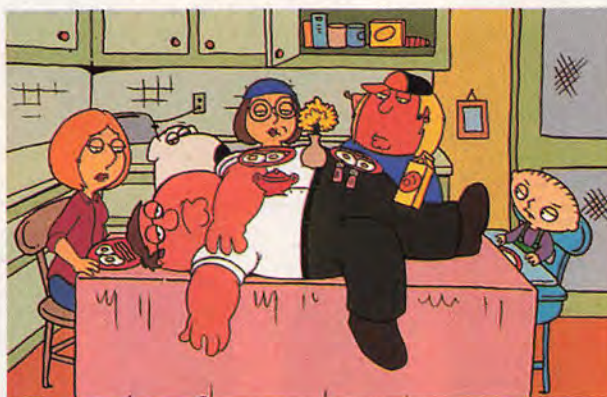
Hanna-Barbera, where he wrote and did some directing on series like *Johnny Bravo*. Meanwhile, his student film was generating buzz (much like that other originally underground novelty *South Park*). After seeing MacFarlane's reel, the producers of Fox's *MAD TV* discussed having him create some shorts. When that plan hit a snag, the net steered him toward developing *Family Guy* for its video clip-fest *The World's*

Funniest!, hoping it could break out as *The Simpsons* had from *The Tracey Ullman Show*.

"Around that time, there was a concern about Fox being known as 'the cartoon network,' because we had *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill*," says Fox VP of alternative programming Leslie Kolins-Small, who played a key role in recruiting MacFarlane. "But Seth's thesis was so hilarious, we just needed to see this

thing made." Recalls MacFarlane: "They said, 'Here's a small amount of money—can you do four shorts for this much?' And it's the kind of thing where you say 'Yes!' even if it's impossible."

MacFarlane spent six months acting as a one-man animation studio, grinding out eight minutes of footage, which ended up bypassing *World's Funniest!* altogether and nabbing him a deal for his own series. "I've never heard of a show getting picked up this way," marvels *Family Guy* exec producer David Zucker-man, a former *King of the Hill* staffer whose pairing with MacFarlane was modeled after *King*'s own successful formula of mixing the hipster genius of Mike Judge (*Beavis and Butt-head*) with the industry know-how of *Simpsons* vet Greg Daniels. "Seth wrote the script,



THE FAMILY WAY In the kitchen with the Griffins; nasty boy Stewie

animated every frame himself, did almost all the voices, and produced it for, like, nothing," says Zuckerman. "Which I think gave Fox the impression that the whole series could be produced for \$60,000 an episode and done in three days." Chimes in MacFarlane: "We certainly disproved *that!*"

The duo seems to have a winning working relationship, despite having at-odds sensibilities. Take their approach to character development: "For me," Zuckerman says, "it's always been, you write a character, then cast the voice. And Seth is constantly saying 'What is it about the voice that suggests the character?'" MacFarlane cuts in: "And then we settle it with bare-knuckle boxing."

Although his shy air and bookish looks might make you mistake MacFarlane for someone from your high school debate team, sit him down for a *Family Guy* table read and he acts like Robin Williams on *Letterman*. He ricochets among 17 different characters, yammering out of the side of his mouth for the Jackie Gleasonish Peter, evilly arching his eyebrows as Stewie, and tossing off a pretty respectable Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock for a typically oddball *Star Trek*/*I Love Lucy* parody. (Later, he'll pop a few grapes in his mouth to simulate Spock snarfing bon-bons.)

The post-Super Bowl kickoff would indicate that Fox knows what it's got in *Family Guy*. Still, it's undecided whether *Family* will get a prized Sunday-night spot when the show's regular run starts in March, or if it will follow *King of the Hill*, which has struggled since moving to Tuesdays. The *Family* guys are making no secret that they're *really* eyeing that post-*Simpsons*, pre-*X-Files* slot. Says Zuckerman: "My pitch is 'Rest That '70s Show, give us a tryout there, let us build an audience, and then make your decision.'" If that doesn't convince them, he could always resort to bare-knuckle boxing. ■



CEL DIVISION (Clockwise from top left) *Futurama*, *Dilbert*, and *PJs* usher in a trend



THE BIG DRAW

Sick of the same old two-dimensional sitcoms, networks are lining up for all things animated

by Dan
Snierson



ILEMMA: WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN, NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY, YOU can't seem to launch a hit live-action sitcom? ♦ Apparently, if you're Fox, you just give up. ♦ Instead of filling gaping schedule holes (left by bawdy bombs like *Costello* and *Living in Captivity*) with more of the same ol' shtick, the network is singing some serious looney tunes: In the coming months, it'll try to launch not one but three bushy-tailed animated comedies—*Family Guy*, *The PJs*, and Matt Groening's *Simpsons* follow-up, *Futurama*. ♦ But it's not just Fox that's getting drawn in. ♦ Faster than you can say *D'oh!*, animation—thanks to the

fortunes of *South Park*, *King of the Hill*, and *The Simpsons*—is turning prime time into a many-pixeled thing. In addition to Fox's mid-season fleet, UPN is hoping (make that *praying*) that it can reverse its ratings slide with comics-page fave *Dilbert* and *Home Movies*, a Squigglevision 'toon (about a grade-school cineast) from the Dr. Katz folks. The WB is joining the fray with another newspaper staple, the welcome-to-new-parenthood paean *Baby Blues*, plus *The Downtowners*, which features three animated urban twentysomethings. "Animation isn't just a trend anymore, it's becoming part of the TV landscape," says Fox programming exec Mike Darnell. "If you don't break out of the pack and look different—you're dead."

How's this for different: The Eddie Murphy vehicle *The PJs* represents prime time's first foray into California Raisin-style foamation (and by the way, it's also the only new animated series set in the projects). "There's a visual quality here closer to big-budget features like *A Bug's Life* and *Toy Story* that hasn't been possible on TV," says *PJs* cocreator Steve Tompkins. "People are going to be excited because they won't know what to expect." Of course, one of the big sells of animation—with its frenetic pacing, surreal imagery, and laugh-track-free template—has always been its ability to escape those cloying live-action sitcom conventions. "It's just fun to be able to write stories that don't involve

a tiny cast of characters going in and out of the same doors," explains *Simpsons* creator Groening, whose year-3000-based *Futurama* features smarmy aliens and 20th-century celebs like Dick Clark and Pamela Anderson forging on as disembodied heads in jars. "The boundaries are far more elastic in animation."

And so are the profits. While new animation series can cost more than their live-action counterparts—and snail-paced production cycles force nets to gamble on bigger episode packages—there's plenty of gold in them thar digitally constructed hills. "These shows have the ability to attract hard-to-reach young males, which is a dream come true for networks," says Twentieth Century Fox TV prez Sandy Grushow, whose studio produces four animated series, including *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy*. "And that doesn't even speak to the potential for merchandising." (That *ka-ching* you just heard was another sale of an Official Cartman Inflatable Chair.)

Alas, it's easier for Wile E. Coyote to outsmart the Road Runner than it is for nets to hatch an animated cash cow. (Remember *Capitol Critters*, *Stressed Eric*, and *Fish Police*? Neither do we.) Fox seems most determined to crack the cartoon

formula—it even nabbed former Comedy Central wizard Doug Herzog, the guy who snatched up *South Park*, to be its new entertainment president. But you don't have to be a Pixar engineer to see a crisis brewing in cartoonland: seven new animated series (three on the same net) vying for the same audience?

"Nobody would say that putting on three male-oriented live-action sitcoms or three dramas is too much," observes Steve Sternberg, senior partner at the TN Media ad agency. "But yes, this strategy seems very ambitious." Concedes Fox's Darnell: "It's going to be survival of the funniest." Groening agrees. "How many hours a day do *you* watch the Cartoon Network?" he asks. "I don't know if people can handle this much animation."

And yet, in the face of Homer-ic gluttony, the cartoon craze may just be getting started this spring. Meg Ryan is developing a quintuplet-girls-in-junior-high premise for UPN, and Fox has three more projects in the pipeline: a 'toon-infused mock-kiddie-clown show, a claymation variety series, and a *Beavis and Butt-head*esque claymation comedy. Hmm, sounds kind of bold. Just please, no *World's Scariest Animated Shoot-outs*. ■



TOP OF THE LINE Fox prez Herzog; the net's trailblazing *Simpsons*





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A CRITICAL LOOK AT THIS WEEK IN ENTERTAINMENT



Winter Takes All

Stars light and stars bright lend their glow to *The Thin Red Line*, *Stepmom*, *A Civil Action*, *Patch Adams*, *The Faculty*, *Hurlyburly*, and *Mighty Joe Young*. **by Owen Gleiberman and Lisa Schwarzbaum**



Soldiers' Story

THE SOLDIERS SURGE up the bright green hill, through pristine blades of tall, sunstruck grass. All the while, they are showered with gunfire, but no one can see where it's coming from. Running a few yards, the men duck into the foliage, then run some more, and the camera

The Thin Red Line

STARRING
Sean Penn
Nick Nolte
TWENTIETH
CENTURY FOX
RATED R
166 MINUTES

runs with them—sweeping, in nervous waves, through the grass, *penetrating* it, without ever quite finding a place to rest.

Terrence Malick's

The Thin Red Line is an epic aestheticization of World War II, a movie at once bold and baffling, immediate and abstract. Set during the Battle of Guadalcanal, when the

Americans, fighting for control of the Japanese-occupied island, turned the tide of the Pacific conflict, much as the invasion of Normandy heralded the victory in Europe, the movie is full of potent and disruptive images that imprint themselves on your retina; it's also full of characters you forget the second they walk off screen. *The Thin Red Line* has moments

of grim oracular power, but they're buried in a blur of grandiloquent vagueness.

Malick, the eccentric New Hollywood legend (*Badlands*, *Days of Heaven*), now returning to filmmaking after a 20-year absence, wants to hypnotize you with his artistry, but instead he ends up bullying you. He has turned James Jones' 1962 novel into a kind of Buddhist tone poem about the timeless spirit of war: men and their guns, their machines of violation, ripping the sacred heart out of "nature." But isn't nature itself a place of violence? One of the characters, the venomous Lieutenant Colonel Tall (Nick Nolte), voices this view, and though the film doesn't ultimately buy into it, I found myself weary, from the start, of the woozy-mystical philosophizing—of Malick's elegiac portentousness. *The Thin Red Line* is full of mournful *pensées* spoken by the soldiers in voice-over, lines like "Maybe all men got one big soul that everybody's a part of." The poetry is visual as well. I've never seen a jungle-set war film that *didn't* include

LINE IN THE SAND (From left) Penn, Nolte, and Koteas

REELWORLD

This week in Hollywood by Steve Daly



INSECT ASIDE An original outtake

■ **LIFE GOES ON** In the new millennium, movies promise to be as malleable as computer software—complete with program updates. Case in point: About four weeks after *A Bug's Life* opened, Disney and Pixar inserted a brand-new set of

ersatz outtakes during the closing credits. This, of course, was just in time to try to upstage DreamWorks' Dec. 18 opening of *The Prince of Egypt*. (Says a DreamWorks rep, "We hoped for more consideration from Disney, but we expected no less.") But by Moses, there's more: *A Bug's Life* will get a further rejigging when it arrives on video later this year. According to director **John Lasseter**, as many as one third of the film's wide-screen images are being "reframed and re-computed" to fit square TVs, sometimes with characters bunched closer together to avoid cropping them (a letterboxed edition will preserve the original theatrical version). "This is a very important innovation," says Lasseter. "It lets us make our movie for the wide screen [and] respect the video release without a lot of compromise."

■ **TITLE TANGO** What directors usually sweat over when they submit a movie to the MPAA is the rating they'll get. But who knew the MPAA's title registration bureau sometimes freaks out over a gerund? Certainly not **Willard Carroll**, writer-director of the Miramax drama formerly known as *Dancing About Architecture*. He was shocked to be told by the MPAA that because Sony Pictures Classics had already scheduled *Dancing at Lughnasa* as a fall 1998 release, *Dancing About Architecture* (which goes wide later this month) would require a new title. Never mind that the films aren't remotely similar, since the former stars **Meryl Streep** as an Irishwoman stuck in a rural existence and the latter follows **Sean Connery** and **Gena Rowlands** as a married couple seemingly headed for a breakup. So Miramax decided to rename its film *Playing by Heart*. Carroll mourned losing the original title for "about a week," he says, then felt better. "If you use a word like *architecture*, it screams 'art film,' and the movie isn't one." ■



HEART MURMURS Connery and Rowlands

a few moments of ironic beauty (rays of sun glinting through the trees and all that), but Malick, who is nothing if not a master of images, piles on the godly serenity: a forest of swaying bamboo stalks; squirmy shellfish; angelic Melanesian natives living in sublime harmony with their surroundings. This is a war film made by a very somber flower child.

Malick dislocates us right from the opening moments, as the Kentucky-born Private Witt (Jim Caviezel), a beatific deserter, frolics in idyllic limbo. We have no idea where we are, or who this man is, and the mood of gentle alienation is the director's way of setting the entire war within a universe of free-floating art gestures. That mood never entirely disappears, but Malick does pull himself together and stage a lengthy and ominous battle sequence, as the men, having landed, attempt to take that giant hill. The first half of *The Thin Red Line* could almost be Malick's protracted version of the D-Day sequence in *Saving Private Ryan* (nameless soldiers facing slaughter from a bunker on high), and though this one isn't nearly as apocalyptic in its brutality, the mood of fear and doom is grippingly sustained. The camera glides forward with Hitchcockian deviousness, so that we're constantly waiting, in dread, to see what lurks *outside* the frame. There's even a developing drama, as Captain Staros (Elias Koteas), the ghostly-eyed leader of Charlie Company, refuses the order of Nolte's gung ho commander to send his men further into battle.

The conflict flares but doesn't come to much. Noth-

ing really does. The soldiers in *The Thin Red Line* look and feel like actual soldiers—any war-movie glamour is scraped away—yet there's something nearly cavalier in the way the film parades its cast of brilliant actors in front of us without quite giving them characters to play. Yes, war is a frenzy of depersonalization, but a war *movie*, even a hellishly authentic one, needs to offer us people to identify with. In *The Thin Red Line*, we pick up on the intensity, the desolate grunt vibe, of certain performers—Sean Penn with his screw-you bravado, John Cusack's eerie reticence, the buried sorrow of Elias Koteas. As the film is structured, though, we hook into these men only in a scattered, fragmentary way. Witt, the drawling innocent, is defined by his disembodied aphorisms, and the other nominal hero, Private Bell (Ben Chaplin), whom we see in gauzy flashbacks to days spent with his loving wife, represents another case of internalized drama. The film's only *real* drama is the imagistic lyricism of Terrence Malick, and nothing is allowed to distract from it.

The Thin Red Line could, I think, turn out to be this season's *Beloved*, a movie too paralyzingly high-minded to connect with audiences. To some, the film may make *Saving Private Ryan* look corny, but Spielberg's movie is actually far tougher. It recognizes the complex truth that war, in all its ugliness, can't just be a violation of nature if, in fact, it is being fought to save civilization. (In World War II, the violation of nature was Hitler.) Malick's platitudinous woe is the real sentimentality. **B-** —OG

Maternal Affairs

Director Chris Columbus, whose talent for creating decorative gingerbread-house domestic comedies benefited *Home Alone* and *Mrs. Doubtfire*, takes an awful lot of pleasure in the girl-girl competition, encouraging the worst in Sarandon and Roberts: Older and younger movie star snipe and glare at each other with little subtlety, and little chemistry either. The two charac-

ters appear to be skirmishing only because they're supposed to by convention; left unbothered by a speechy, pronouncement-filled script it took five writers to assemble, they probably would have little use for each other. (Harris' Luke, having established himself as a man in touch with his feelings but understandably afraid of being bitch-slapped, sits most of the story out.)

Stepmom takes a serious turn for the mawkish, though, when Jackie is hit with cancer—what kind we don't know, only that "it's spread" and that's very, very bad. ("But I did everything right!" she wails.) The movie trailer lets on nothing about this arbitrary, very, very sad development, I know. But it's important to report, at the very least to help ticket buyers decide whether another dying-mom tear tweezer—coming so soon after motherly Meryl Streep sickened in *One True Thing*, and arriving 15 years after motherly Debra Winger ex-

pired during the holiday release of *Terms of Endearment*—fits in with year-end entertainment plans.

Even moviegoers looking for catharsis, meanwhile, may well question why *Stepmom* requires Jackie to hide the state of her health from her kids or her ex for so long. That selfish action is an unlikely *F--- you* to the people she loves, engineered entirely (and unfairly) so that Isabel can be the one to discover the truth and ease the way for girl-girl reconciliation. ("You're Mother Earth incarnate!" Isabel sighs. "I have [the children's] past and you have their future," Jackie recites.) By then it's Christmastime, and while she looks nowhere near death, Jackie more or less bids a fond farewell to everyone, probably so she won't have to put on white powder and red eye shadow like Streep did recently in a movie that, compared with this lab-engineered weepie, is the soul of realism. **D** —LS

STARRING
**Susan
Sarandon
Julia Roberts**
COLUMBIA
RATED PG-13
122 MINUTES

Here's how a sampling of critics and movie audiences from across the country grade 10 current releases.

Here's how a sampling of critics and movie audiences from across the country grade 10 current releases.		CINEMASCOPE Audience across the U.S.	ROGER EBERT Siskel & Ebert	GENE SISKEL Siskel & Ebert	JAMI BERNARD High Middle Syndicate	CARRIE RICKEY High-Roller Syndicate	MIKE CLARK USA Today	ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY	CRITICS AVERAGE
A Bug's Life	DISNEY	A	B+	B	A	B+	A	B	B+
A Civil Action	TOUCHSTONE	—	B	A	B	B+	C+	C+	B
Patch Adams	UNIVERSAL	—	D	C	F	—	D-	F	D-
The Prince of Egypt	DREAMWORKS	—	B+	A-	B-	A	B-	B	B+
Shakespeare in Love	MIRAMAX	—	B+	A-	A-	B+	A-	A	A-
A Simple Plan	PARAMOUNT	—	A	B	A	—	B	A	A-
Star Trek: Insurrection	PARAMOUNT	B+	C	B	D	C+	—	C	C
Stepmom	COLUMBIA	—	C	B+	B	C	C-	D	C+
The Thin Red Line	20TH CENTURY FOX	—	—	A+	A-	B-	A	B-	B+
You've Got Mail	WARNER BROS.	—	B	B+	B	B	B	B	B

>> Critical Mass Interactive: Grade the movies yourself at www.ew.com <<



ON THE WATERFRONT Tony Shalhoub and Travolta investigate in *Action*

Toxic Avenger

JOHN TRAVOLTA HAS A gift for playing flamboyantly self-satisfied smooth-talk hustlers, but it mysteriously deserted him in *Primary Colors* (where he made the most verbally dexterous politician of our time look like a good ol' jackass). Now he's got it back in *A Civil Action*. In this courtroom drama adapted from Jonathan Harr's true-life best-seller about the case of eight Woburn, Mass., families whose children contracted leukemia, Travolta is blithe and sharky as Jan Schlichtmann, a personal-injury lawyer who makes no bones about the fact that he's a parasite. The film is set in the '80s, but in Hollywood terms, Schlichtmann (a name even the pulpiest screenwriter might not have dreamed up) is portrayed as a new-style ambulance chaser: not just sleazy but *proud* of his venality, a master of exploiting other people's pain.

Smelling a big payoff,

Schlichtmann agrees to let his firm take on the case of the eight families, who believe, but can't prove, that their collective tragedy was brought about by negligence. Spurring him on are a couple of very big corporate fish: W.R. Grace & Co. and Beatrice Foods, both of which are alleged to have dumped toxic chemicals, thereby poisoning the local drinking

water. The companies have so much to lose that Schlichtmann, who is used to prodding defendants into ponying up huge cash settlements, can't bring him-

self to resolve the case out of court, even when one of the companies makes an offer. He wants the *ultimate* score. Or is it that he wants justice? It's the premise of *A Civil Action* that Schlichtmann, almost in spite of himself, begins to change his spots during the trial. He spends all of the firm's money, plunging it into debt. He gets himself and his partners in so deep that they can't pull out. Their only choice is to win the case.

A Civil Action

STARRING
John Travolta
Robert Duvall
TOUCHSTONE
RATED PG-13
153 MINUTES

Written and directed by Steven Zaillian, who made *Searching for Bobby Fischer* (1993) and wrote the screenplay for *Schindler's List*, *A Civil Action* starts well, but it turns into an almost pervasively undramatic legal thriller. The evidence of the companies' actions is presented right up front, with little of the usual surprise-witness hokum. No problem there, except that as the case

drags on, and Schlichtmann and his team shrink further from victory, the film turns, in essence, into the story of how they lose their shirts. We're denied the melodramatic pleasures of the courtroom genre, but, more than that, there's something a little unseemly in the way that Zaillian glorifies Schlichtmann's plunge into insolvency, as if *that* were a more vital issue than the pain of the families (who are given short shrift). Robert Duvall, speaking in a dulcet quaver, carves exquisite ham as the Harvard law professor who defends Beatrice Foods, and though he's clearly portrayed as the bad guy, it's easy to sit back and glory in the actor's homespun ruthlessness. Having the gumption to win isn't everything, but in a courtroom drama it counts for a lot. **C+**

—OG

Bad Medicine

ROBIN WILLIAMS HAS played doctors before, he's played iconoclasts, he's played nonconformists who display a sensitivity to human suffering far superior to that of the average human. Often these characters are funny and hyper-verbal, propelled by the comedian's restless wit and his craving for the emotional release he finds in improvisation. Always they make a big, fat play for our admiration. (Such an inspiration to students in *Dead Poets Society*! Such a gifted shrink in *Good Will Hunting*!) But nothing Williams has done is quite as craven and full of horsefeathers as his star turn in *Patch Adams*, an offensive and deeply false "inspirational" drama that idiotically indicts the entire medical profession in the service of making one man—Adams, which is to say Williams—look like a cockeyed saint.

The movie, directed by Tom Shadyac and written by Steve Oedekerk with a calculated smarm you'd never expect from two men behind the *Ace Ventura* films, is based on a true story: There really is a

Patch Adams

STARRING
Robin Williams
Monica Potter
UNIVERSAL
RATED PG-13
110 MINUTES



PHYSICIAN IMPOSSIBLE As Dr. Patch Adams, Williams works the ward

Dr. Hunter "Patch" Adams, who, having overcome his own depression, has devoted his life to helping others in pain, using humor as a tool; he's the founder of the Gesundheit Institute, and he takes clowning seriously. But no one takes clowning as egotistically as the Adams created by Williams. Enrolled in medical school—supposedly in the late 1960s, but for all intents and purposes in a Victorian age when a Scrooge-like dean (Bob Gunton) stresses a doctor's need to eradicate his or her own humanity—Adams questions authority at every turn. "Illegally" visiting hospital patients (he's a first-year student, and only third-year students are allowed), he miraculously lifts their spirits by putting an enema bulb on his nose or rubber gloves on his head.

And, oh, how his audience beams! Horribly weak children lift their little bald heads, their cancers nothing compared with his mighty talent. Nurses (all of them grossly undervalued, of course) laugh at his antics like delighted lovers. A violent, dying man (Peter Coyote) lets go of his terrible rage when Adams sings "Blue Skies." Fellow students—notably a pretty grind (Monica Potter) and a devoted sidekick (Daniel London)—look at their leader as nothing less than a god. Only the evil dean and the cartoonishly heartless medical establishment he represents are threatened by Patch's unconventional ways.

"I want to really *listen* to people!" Adams burbles when he discovers his life's calling. But with Williams prancing so shamelessly, *Patch Adams* doesn't leave room for anyone else to breathe, let alone speak. It goes down like medicine. And the side effects are toxic. **F** —LS



THE POD SQUAD Shawn Hatosy, Hartnett, Harris, DuVall, and Elijah Wood try to avoid running into *The Faculty*

Replacement Killers

EVEN IF KEVIN WILLIAMSON's name weren't on the script of the high school alien-parasite thriller *The Faculty*, you'd still associate it with him. The movie plays like the work of a smart young hack who'd watched the *Scream* films and *Dawson's Creek* and figured that it couldn't be all that hard to come up with his own crew of nonchalantly downbeat (and overarticulate) teenagers. There's a playful contradiction at the heart of Williamson's characters, who speak in an exhibitionistic flurry of pop references in order to assert their rebel identity and soul. They're desperate to distinguish themselves from the horde, yet all they have to deploy are the styles and attitudes of the infotainment-consumer culture. Their "individuality" is really the ultimate status symbol.

In *The Faculty*, the umpteenth update of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, a mysterious otherworldly visitor arrives on the campus of rural Ohio's Herrington High,

where it proceeds to take over the teachers (most entertainingly, a discombobulated Jon Stewart) and then infiltrate the student body. Who, among the kids, could be the reigning host? Is it the snarling faux-lesbian punkette (Clea DuVall)? The know-it-all troublemaker (Josh Hartnett) who's too cool to use his brains in class? The sweetly virginal Southern belle

(Laura Harris) who has just arrived from Atlanta? Or the junior Demi Moore look-alike cheerleader (Jordana Brewster) who presides over the eternal school popularity contest as though she were running a military campaign?

If *The Faculty* were half as witty as *Scream*, it might have used the notion of a cliquish high school vanguard's members becoming pods of themselves as a vehicle to satirize the supersubtle role playing of these mall-rat babies. In a strange way, though, the

Williamson of *Dawson's Creek* is now at odds with Williamson the sophisticated trash joker. He's become too protective of his characters—too invested in the earnestness of teen angst to portray it in the

scathing parodistic terms a hip horror movie demands.

It doesn't help that *The Faculty* was directed by Robert Rodriguez (*From Dusk Till Dawn*), a specialist in literal-minded slapstick dementia. Rodriguez stages Williamson's thriller/soap opera shenanigans as though he were scurrying through a maze he couldn't wait to reach the end of, and by the second half you see why. *The Faculty* erupts into an exuberantly random F/X blowout, a vision of young actors sporting wormy tentacles the size of elephant trunks. Some of this is fun in a low-grade *Hellraiser* sort of way, but it reduces the script's mildest ambitions to hamburger. In *The Faculty*, it's Kevin Williamson's talent that turns into a pod of itself. **C+** —OG

The Faculty

STARRING
Elijah Wood
Josh Hartnett

DIMENSION
RATED R
116 MINUTES



Raging Bull

IN **Hurlyburly**, THE MEN are foulmouthed, twitchy, angry, vulgar, shallow, self-absorbed, woman-hating, and nose-deep in drugs and alcohol. The women are abused, unhappy, distracted, distrustful, and disheveled. The setting is Hollywood. And the time, according to the opening title, is "a little while ago"—in other words, a 1980s-ish cocaine-fueled era recent enough to justify the inclusion of the frequent cell phone conversations with which director Anthony Drazan (*Zebrahead*) and screenwriter David Rabe update Rabe's attention-getting 1984 play. *Hurlyburly* is supposedly about the crummy depths to which men and women can sink in the course of climbing in a city that craves heights—creative, sexual, financial, chemical. But it's also about the highs of being an actor: This ensemble piece is a tedious circus of apoplectic speeches and explosive thespian snit fits—the fits, in the end, being more to the point than the existential condition they are meant to describe.

In other words, I don't buy

the whole men-boffing-women/men-screwing-each-other-in-Heartless-Hollywood premise as put forth by Rabe and Drazan. (The director over-stresses the mood with jarring camera activity that bounces off a lot of reflective surfaces.) But I do buy that actors will sell their grandmothers for the opportunity to growl, mumble, bark, and snarl hot lines of dialogue like "Well, f--- her, the whore."

The howling ensemble is led

by Sean Penn, who rages so strenuously, we fear for his blood pressure; everything beautifully controlled in his *Thin Red Line* performance is here

blown wild. Others baying at the L.A. moon include Chazz Palminteri, Garry Shandling, little Anna Paquin from *The Piano*, all grown up, and a happy-to-be-slutty Meg Ryan. Amid such actorly foaming, then, Kevin Spacey's coolly modulated coldness and the relative elegance of Robin Wright Penn stand out. Their characters are no less despicable, but they win points for *not* letting everything hang out, no matter what helter-skelter *Hurlyburly* throws their way. **C-** —LS

Hurlyburly

STARRING
Sean Penn
Kevin Spacey
FINE LINE
RATED R
122 MINUTES



CAGED HEAT Theron sidles up to a captive audience in *Mighty Joe Young*

Gorilla Filmmaking

HE'S NIFTY TO LOOK AT. Huge but not quite humungous, with giant bulgy limbs and a back so long and jutting it looks like something you'd want to ride a skateboard off, the title beast of **Mighty Joe Young** is undeniably a special-effects marvel. He doesn't just look like an actual gorilla. He *moves* like one, so that when he's galloping in a rage across a grassy plain, swiping his hand at a vehicle he's trying to outrun, you feel you're seeing a creature who's fantastic yet real. Of course, what

Mighty Joe Young

STARRING
Charlize Theron
Bill Paxton
WALT DISNEY
RATED PG
115 MINUTES

you're actually watching is animatronic puppetry, computer-generated imagery, and—that old fave—a man in an ape suit, but the seamless merging of special effects is a marvel to behold.

Neat as Joe looks, you do wish that someone had bothered to give him a personality. *Mighty Joe Young*, a remake of the 1949 sentimental monster melodrama (in essence, *King Kong* with a smaller oversize gorilla), is a showcase for the imagination of visual effects wizard Rick Baker, but the script is very

bland monkey business indeed. Raised in a jungle outside an African village, where he has formed a lifelong friendship with Jill (Charlize Theron), a kind of amateur babelicious Jane Goodall, Joe is threatened by the same evil poachers who killed his mother. He is taken to the safety of a California animal conservancy and, once there, put on display as a way to lure funding. (Is there a movie of the late '90s that *isn't* about finance?) The poachers find him anyway, of course. It's up to Jill and Gregg (Bill Paxton), the zoologist she has been flirting with, to take action.

No more cages! No more wildlife preserves! Free *Mighty Joe Young*! Free him so that he can bust out and go wild on Hollywood Boulevard! If *Mighty Joe Young* weren't so predictable, it might have been grade-B fun. As it is, even Jill's "bond" with Joe is an erotic joke that never hatches. In one year alone, Charlize Theron has had to make goo-goo eyes at both a giant ape and Kenneth Branagh channeling Woody Allen. It's time she was matched up with some higher primates. **C** —OG



SLEAZY DOES IT *Hurlyburly's* Penn and Spacey say very bad things

The Week

Reviews by OWEN GLEIBERMAN and LISA SCHWARZBAUM

New Releases

DOWN IN THE DELTA (Miramax, PG-13) Maya Angelou—poet and honored cultural personage—makes her feature directing debut with a story that draws heavily on Fresh Air Fund philosophy: The surest cure for what ails the troubled modern, industrialized African American is good Southern country living and the love of a family proud of its heritage. Well, sure, but that doesn't solve the problems of urban ghetto life now, does it? What keeps this particular feel-good fable from stiffening like dried honey are supple, fresh performances, most rewardingly by the always blazing Alfre Woodard as a strung-out single mother going down the tubes in a bullet-pocked Chicago neighborhood, and by Al Freeman Jr. as gracious down-home denizen Uncle Earl, who takes her in for a spell, along with her son and autistic daughter. Basking in the gold Mississippi Delta light—manufactured on location outside of Toronto—the director relaxes her tense Storyteller Grip and gives the strong cast freedom to expand. (Freeman is especially tender with the late Esther Rolle as his wife, bewildered and adrift with Alzheimer's disease. And for extra star power, producer Wesley Snipes plays Earl's son, a yuppie with an admirable desire to support the community of his childhood.) Roots matter, is Angelou's Hallmark-style lesson. So for good measure, novice screenwriter Myron Goble also includes an unsuitable subplot about a candelabra that has been in the family since slaves were

freed, thereby throwing one more ingredient into this thick dramatic gumbo. **B** —LS

THE HI-LO COUNTRY (Gramercy, R) Everything in this post-World War II American cowboy story is scaled big—the sweep of the dusty New Mexico landscape; the brute power of animals on the range; the rock-solid bond between two men; the intense pitch at which whiskey is knocked back, cards are slapped down, women are fought over. You can easily imagine Sam Peckinpah taking on this turf, as indeed he hankered to do for years after the publication of Max Evans' 1961 novel. But the project couldn't get off the ground until recently, and now here's British dude Stephen Frears (*The Grifters*), casting an eye at the horizon and nearly whistling with awed appreciation for the Cowboy Code of Honor. Everything is in place for a mythic drama—including a screenplay by Walon Green, who cowrote Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*—except the players, who don't begin to fill the boots of the archetypes they're meant to be. As Big Boy Matson, a rancher and returning Marine afraid of no man, including the husband of the hot-blooded woman he loves (Patricia Arquette, whose blood is positively tepid), Woody Harrelson furiously but unconvincingly works his jaw in a way meant to signify Unbreakable Spirit of the West; in fact, it signifies callow caricature. Billy Crudup, as Pete Calder, casts forlorn looks at Big Boy's cutie-pie (he pines for her) as well as at Big Boy himself (he worships him), but, far from the mighty power he projects in *Without Limits*, Crudup here settles for such a



MILD MILD WEST Crudup and Harrelson go cowboy in *The Hi-Lo Country*

loving-puppy mope, that other, softer Prefontaine player, Jared Leto, might just as well have taken the role. With boyish sensibilities like these, Marlboro Country looks like mighty bleak country. **C+** —LS

In Theaters

A BUG'S LIFE (G) A hellzapoppin creature-feature jamboree. Flick, a renegade ant, tries to round up some warrior bugs to defend his colony from a tribe of grasshopper bullies. The best he can come up with is a troupe of flea-circus performers. Some of the jokes are great, but the insects are strangely one-note characters. *A Bug's Life* is so obsessed with wowing you, in every corner of every frame, that as a movie it doesn't quite breathe. **B** (#460, Nov. 27) —OG

ENEMY OF THE STATE (R) A high-adrenaline action thriller that mixes hot-button issues of privacy and surveillance, good chase scenes, and an array of supercool hardware and software. Of course, being a Tony Scott-Jerry Bruckheimer production, it's slowed by excess and glandular fever. But Will Smith is a fresh choice as the victim of illegal government hanky-panky. **B** (#460, Nov. 27) —LS

JACK FROST (PG) So treacly and fake you feel like you're trapped in a winter-wonderland paperweight. Michael Keaton plays Jack Frost, a small-town Colorado daddy who dies and returns to life as a blustery, wisecracking snowman who looks like a cross between the Pillsbury Doughboy and Lionel Barrymore. This slapdash comic fantasy wants to be a Spielbergian fairy tale—*E.T.* with

attitude—but it gives you nothing to respond to but the special effects, which turn Jack the snowman joker into a dancing, toboggan-riding, supple-bodied special pal. **D+** (#463, Dec. 18) —OG

THE PRINCE OF EGYPT (PG) The first animated musical feature from DreamWorks turns the stormy figure of Moses into a slender, rather mild-spirited young man whose wispy beard makes him look like a draft dodger, but it takes him on a moral journey that's swift, sure, and compelling. No more a vulgarization of the Old Testament than *The Ten Commandments* was, the movie has been drawn with a beautiful pastel angularity, and the voices of Val Kilmer (Moses), Ralph Fiennes (Ramses), and Patrick Stewart (Pharaoh Seti) are virile and commanding. That said, there's a nagging disjunction between the grandeur of the tale and the gee-whiz dialogue, and Stephen Schwartz's songs are mostly "operatic" show-tune pap. Moses was elevating mankind to a place closer to God, but when the Red Sea parts here, the feeling it gives you isn't awe; it's closer to deep impact. **B** (#463, Dec. 18) —OG

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE (R) Enchanting. It's 1593, and William Shakespeare (Joseph Fiennes) is at work on his new play, a romantic comedy entitled *Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate's Daughter*. Then he meets his muse, Viola De Lesseps (Gwyneth Paltrow), a beautiful heiress who is gaga for his writing. Unfortunately, she is set to marry someone else. As the weeks go by, the play becomes infused with the lifeblood of Shakespeare's passion.



ICING ON THE CAKE Snipes and Woodard sweeten *Down in the Delta*



WINNER OF THE WEEK

Steven Spielberg

In recognition of his body of work, the filmmaker will reportedly receive the Goldene Kamera, Germany's most prominent film award, at a February ceremony.

LOSER OF THE WEEK

'Very Bad Things'

Despite the presence of Cameron Diaz, this murderous black comedy couldn't get arrested. In its fifth week, the movie fell out of the top 20 and has grossed around \$10 million to date.

Shakespeare in Love has been made with an exuberant theatricality and wit—it's the richest and most satisfying romantic movie of the year. Fiennes, who looks like Prince in his Bambi-pimp phase, plays Shakespeare as a man forced to talk dizzying circles of metaphor around himself simply to express what he's feeling. And Paltrow is truly his match; her emotions are so luminous they seem to be shining right through her skin. **A** (#462, Dec. 11) —OG

A SIMPLE PLAN (R) In Sam Raimi's rivetingly accomplished crime thriller, Hank (Bill Paxton), a small-town accountant, is wandering through the snowy woods with his dim-bulb older brother, Jacob (Billy Bob Thornton), and Jacob's beer-guzzling buddy, Lou (Brent Briscoe), when they discover a crashed plane that contains \$4 mil-

lion. They hatch a plan to take the money, but their greed acts like truth serum, bringing the ugliest sides of their relationships bubbling to the surface. *A Simple Plan* is lean, elegant, and emotionally complex—a marvel of backwoods classicism. As Jacob the born loser, Thornton gives a memorable performance, as if Jim Varney were channeling Charles Laughton. **A** (#462, Dec. 11) —OG

STAR TREK: INSURRECTION (PG) The *Enterprise* team lands on a planet where unusual radiation reverses aging and an ancient resident (Donna Murphy) looks as young as Diane Sawyer. This unexceptional ninth *Trek* feature is a midlife production in which each crew member does his or her vaudeville act, all of them expending minimal effort; perhaps a week of radiation treatments would rejuvenate their beloved, thickening life-forms and give them a chance to figure out where to fly from here. **C** (#463, Dec. 18) —LS

WAKING NED DEVINE (PG) This snappy, sunny Irish comedy unfolds with an unforced inevitability that never condescends to sticky adorableness. Another plus: The old coots at the center of the hilarity don't succumb to Irish Twinkle. Ian Bannen and David Kelly star as pensioners hell-bent on hanging on to the lottery millions that would have gone to a local villager—except for the unfortunate fact that he died of shock. **A-** (#460, Nov. 27) —LS

THE WATERBOY (PG-13) Utterly dehydrated. Adam Sandler plays a socially retarded liquid server who discovers a hidden talent for tackling when he acts on his pent-up anger. This unfunny low comedy is aimed strictly at college dorm residents and their younger brothers. **D-** (#458, Nov. 13) —LS

YOU'VE GOT MAIL (PG) Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan play e-mail sweethearts who don't realize they're business enemies and prettily dressed Manhattan neighbors in Nora Ephron's unsteady but ultimately seductive romantic comedy, stolen and reworked from the beguiling 1940 classic *The Shop Around the Corner*. And all seduction credit goes to Hanks, effectively, endearingly convincing as the hard-charging owner of a book-superstore chain. (Ryan, with her nose-crinkling, perky-pooky mannerisms, is less convincing as the owner of an independent children's bookshop.) **B** (#463, Dec. 18) —LS

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BOX OFFICE



QUIRKY QUACKS Williams and Monica Potter make the rounds in *Patch Adams*

'ADAMS' RIBBING

MAYBE IT WON'T be a red Christmas after all for sickly Universal. After suffering *agita* brought on by the recent flops *Meet Joe Black* and *Babe: Pig in the City*, the studio got some welcome relief from the Robin Williams hospital-set dramedy *Patch Adams*. The film's \$25.3 million stocking stuffing marked the biggest three-day Christmas weekend debut ever—and the third-highest December opening to date (behind last year's *Scream 2* and *Titanic*). The Julia Roberts-Susan Sarandon domestic weeper *Stepmom* brought in a merry \$19.1 million, while less festive tidings went to the teen horror flick *The Faculty* and the giant-gorilla fest *Mighty Joe Young*. And proving that sometimes good things come in small packages, the limited releases of *The Thin Red Line* and *A Civil Action* unwrapped \$44,710 and \$35,040 per screen, respectively.

TOP 20

		WEEKEND GROSS*	NO. OF SITES†	WEEKEND PER-SITE AVERAGE	WEEKS IN RELEASE	GROSS TO DATE
1	PATCH ADAMS Universal	\$25.3	2,712	\$9,315	1	\$25.3
2	STEPMOM Columbia	\$19.1	2,358	\$8,118	1	\$19.1
3	YOU'VE GOT MAIL Warner Bros.	\$18.1	2,756	\$6,568	2	\$47.4
4	THE PRINCE OF EGYPT DreamWorks	\$15.1	3,218	\$4,698	2	\$40.1
5	THE FACULTY Dimension	\$11.6	2,365	\$4,919	1	\$11.6
6	MIGHTY JOE YOUNG Walt Disney	\$10.6	2,502	\$4,237	1	\$10.6
7	A BUG'S LIFE Walt Disney	\$10.1	2,456	\$4,123	6	\$114.5
8	STAR TREK: INSURRECTION Paramount	\$7.3	2,677	\$2,728	3	\$47.7
9	ENEMY OF THE STATE Touchstone	\$5.3	1,505	\$3,519	6	\$87.5
10	JACK FROST Warner Bros.	\$3.9	2,142	\$1,822	3	\$22.5
11	THE RUGRATS MOVIE Paramount	\$2.7	2,225	\$1,198	6	\$82.0
12	SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE Miramax	\$2.6	295	\$8,847	3	\$3.6
13	THE WATERBOY Touchstone	\$2.3	1,281	\$1,821	8	\$145.6
14	WAKING NED DEVINE Fox Searchlight	\$1.7	259	\$6,425	6	\$3.9
15	DOWN IN THE DELTA Miramax	\$1.6	416	\$3,934	1	\$1.6
16	RUSH HOUR New Line	\$1.6	1,014	\$1,530	15	\$134.8
17	LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL Miramax	\$1.0	224	\$4,412	10	\$9.4
18	ELIZABETH Gramercy	\$0.9	409	\$2,088	8	\$14.6
19	URBAN LEGEND TriStar	\$0.5	541	\$983	14	\$37.1
20	PSYCHO Universal	\$0.5	680	\$775	4	\$20.0

SOURCE: EXHIBITOR RELATIONS CO. INC. WEEKEND OF DEC. 25-27 *WEEKEND GROSS AND GROSS-TO-DATE FIGURES IN MILLIONS †INCLUDES SOME MULTISCREEN THEATERS AND PRINTS SHIPPED AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL SCREENS



Dr. Feelbad

In *Providence*, a plastic surgeon to the stars gives her life a face-lift, but the sappy new NBC drama doesn't quite cut it. by Ken Tucker

AS ANNOYING AS SOME OF the bratty whelps on *Dawson's Creek*, *Felicity*, and *Party of Five* can be—to say nothing of the obnoxiousness of everything except the pizza on *Two Guys, a Girl and a Pizza Place*—at least those young people have energy and a basic will to live. Not so the wistful just-post-baby boomers who excrete oily snail's trails of sentimentality and despair on sloooooow shows such as CBS' *To Have & to Hold*, *Maggie Winters*, and NBC's now shelved *Trinity*, and a new wrist slitter disguised as an upbeat series, **Providence**. This is the sort of show that,

when its star, a doctor named Sydney Hansen (Melina Kanakaredes), says in the premiere's opening voice-over, "Thomas Wolfe said you can't go home again," you just know that girl is headed straight home again. In this case, Syd is leaving Southern California, where she had a highly successful plastic surgery practice to the stars (Syd "bobbed *Tori Spelling's* beak," says one admiring patient), and is high-tailing it back to her family's nest in Providence. Why? Because she caught her boyfriend in the shower with a

man—a pruney wrinkle on the other-woman cliché.

I must say, it doesn't take much to knock the wind out of Syd's sails. Instead of merely ejecting the creep and getting

on with her booming career, the verging-on-homophobically horrified Syd slinks back to her veterinarian dad

(played by *M*A*S*H's* Mike Farrell), her single-mom sister, Joanie (Paula Cale), and her sleazeball brother, Robbie (*Profiler's* Seth Peterson). Before you can blink, Syd is the new doc in residence at a makeshift hospital in an old church, the St. Clare's Family

Clinic, where she gets her pride back delivering babies and mending broken limbs. (The notion that plastic surgery is the devil's work comes up in all three of the series' first episodes; what do the L.A.-based producers of *Providence* have against the carving knives of the rich and famous?)

By the start of the second episode, Syd's opening voice-over has found a new cliché—"F. Scott Fitzgerald said there were no second acts in American life." Syd's new life as a selfless healer is supposed to contradict Fitzgerald, but if so, this is one mighty long, overwritten second act. Like Faith Ford in the go-home-again *Maggie Winters*, when Syd embarked on her fast-lane L.A. life she left behind a

NBC
Providence
8-9 PM
FRIDAYS

RHODE WARRIORS (From left)
Providence's Hansens—Peterson,
Kanakaredes, Farrell, and Cale



GHOST MOM The spectral Tomei

handsome suitor who settled for smaller-town life, in this case, *Central Park West*'s Tom Verica as a humble, grinning chauffeur. If ever there was a guy who had *loser* written across his driver's cap, it's Verica's Kyle, yet Syd and the cameras take him in as if he were a Roman god. Just as Maggie Winters flirts with and moons over Tom, *her* hometown easygoing dolt, so does Syd giggle and squirm when Kyle asks her to split a sandwich with him, straight from his gen-u-ine brown lunch sack.

Honestly, you'd think these people lived in Podunk. Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't Providence a fairly worldly metropolis? Populating it with aw-shucks guys like Kyle and a puppy-tickling vet who makes house calls—Farrell's unfortunate fate in this show's life—bespeaks a certain amount of TV-industry condescension. Creator-producer John Masius has worked on both *St. Elsewhere* and *Touched by an Angel*, but rather than bringing *St. Elsewhere*'s imagination and tension to *Providence*'s hospital scenes, he opts for *Angel*'s goopy spiritualism.

For I haven't told you the most unbearable part of the show: In the pilot, Syd's mother, played by Concetta Tomei, dies, and ever there-

after, she reappears as a solid-looking, chain-smoking ghost, visible only to Syd, in reveries that are supposed to be heartbreaking and black-comic but instead come off merely drippy.

You can understand why Masius built the show around Kanakaredes: She's a composite of current hit-show characteristics. She's got undulating mountains of dark curly hair that give Keri Russell's Felicity a run for her follicles. And with her large eyes and knowing smile, she also radiates a beatific calm similar to that of Roma Downey on Masius' *Touched*. But the writers have failed to surround saintly Syd with much support; both her brother and sister are odiously self-absorbed, and Dad's just the opposite, all touchy-feely (Farrell strokes a bulldog in the third episode as if it were his long-lost lover—hey, *that* would send Syd ping-ponging back to L.A. and her bi boyfriend, wouldn't it?).

The message I'm receiving from shows like *Providence* is that, as they move into their 40s, the once-rebellious late boomers are weary of the sociocultural changes they set in motion; they want things to slow down. (On *Providence*, this is dramatized literally—every time there's an emergency or an emotional moment, it's shot in slow motion. The idea is to soak the scene in poignance; instead it drowns it in bathos.) At the same time, we're supposed to admire a character like Syd for her hardheaded realism, the way she takes command of the clinic's wayward staff and makes the tough decisions. The drama, like too many members of its target generation, wants it both ways. It ends up just being chicken soup for the soulless. **C-**

ON THE AIR

The latest news from the TV beat by Joe Flint

■ **ALL IN THE TIMING** If your supermarket kept moving your favorite foods to different aisles, eventually you'd get so frustrated you'd shop somewhere else, right? Alas, the networks

have yet to learn that lesson.

Lately it seems that every time you finally figure out where a show is, it's up and gone. Take NBC: In an effort to shore up its disastrous Monday-night lineup, the Peacock decided to relocate *Mad About You* from its Tuesday perch to Mondays at 9 p.m. In the process, *Will & Grace*—the one



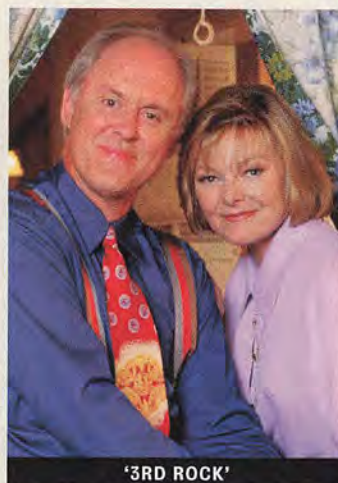
'CUPID'

Monday show with any life—got shipped off to Tuesdays. Such abrupt changes of address could backfire and simply alienate the few viewers who were tuning in to the struggling sitcoms.

"The networks are no longer in the position where they can inform all of their viewers about changes before they happen," says Steve Sternberg, senior partner of TN Media. "A lot of *Mad About You* [fans] are not even aware it's now on Mondays." In fact, the ratings for the first Monday airing of the show bear that out: It averaged only 8.7 million viewers, a new low.

This is not to say that all moves are unwise. CBS pushed *Everybody Loves Raymond* from 8:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Mondays and increased viewership by 10 percent. *Seinfeld* became a hit after it switched to Thursdays in 1993. But those moves were made *before* the TV season had started. As for ABC's mid-season decision to move *Cupid* to Thursdays—that just may give the drama the sort of exposure that it's never gotten in its Saturday slot.

The trick is picking your battles. The most abused victim of overzealous schedule changes, *3rd Rock From the Sun*, was a Sunday hit for NBC until they pushed their luck and moved it to Wednesdays, foolishly thinking it could take on ABC's *The Drew Carey Show*. So NBC decided to move it once again. The result? Now *Sun*'s getting burned on Tuesdays. "They can try it somewhere else," sums up Sternberg, "but they've already killed it." ■



'3RD ROCK'

REMOTE PATROL

Keeping a watch on TV by Bruce Fretts

A wish list of New Year's resolutions for *The Practice*, *90210*, and other TV sinners

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR again—you know, New Year's—and I have a few TV-related pledges to make. I resolve to boycott *Hyperion Bay* until The WB puts new co-star Carmen Electra in a red bathing suit and changes the title to *Hyperion Baywatch*. I resolve to watch at least one UPN show, because I believe that suffering can make you stronger. And I resolve to stop picking on *Mad About You*'s Paul Reiser—it's not polite to kick a guy when he's down in the ratings (even if he is making \$1 million an episode...not that I'm picking).

Perhaps not surprisingly, I've also got a few suggestions for New Year's resolutions that various TV series might want to consider. Of course, nobody ever keeps resolutions beyond Jan. 2, but it'd be nice if

these shows would at least try to break bad habits:

NEWSRADIO should resolve to figure out who the hell Jon Lovitz's character is supposed to be. Is new anchorman Max Lewis an oily operator? A pathetic loser? So far, Lovitz merely seems to be mixing up his old *SNL* shticks: a pinch of the Master Thespian here, a dash of the Liar there. No, that's *not* the ticket.

BECKER should resolve to spend less time in the doctor's office. Fittingly, *Cheers* vet Ted Danson seems more comfortable hanging out at the local watering hole than he does healing the sick at his Bronx clinic. Plus, the sitcom's most promising supporting characters are found at the diner: Terry Farrell's sarcastic hash slinger and Alex Desert's dryly witty blind newsstand operator.



STRIPPING DOWN TO HER CIVVIES *JAG*'s Bell in and out of uniform

SPORTS NIGHT should resolve to cut out the ABC/Disney plugs. First, Felicity Huffman's tough-gal producer discovered the magic of the theater after seeing *The Lion King* (it couldn't have been *Ragtime*?). Then, the ladies of *The View* contributed a cross-promotional cameo. Quit it before honcho Robert Guillaume is replaced by Michael Eisner.

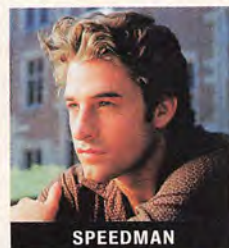
JAG should resolve to get Mac (Catherine Bell) out of her unflattering military get-up as often as possible. Sure, Harm (David James Elliott) looks great in his dress-white uniform, but I'd much rather see Mac decked out in something that better accentuates Bell's curves.

THE PRACTICE should resolve to do at least one episode in which one of the lawyers doesn't feel guilty about being a lawyer. Maybe David E. Kelley thinks post-O.J. America will only sympathize with defense attorneys

if they loathe themselves as much as we loathe them. But the self-lacerating speeches are wearing as thin as Lara Flynn Boyle.

MARTIAL LAW should resolve to cook up a romance for rotund leading man Sammo Hung. The freshman series offers loads of action and both physical and verbal comedy (much of the latter courtesy of welcome new costar Arsenio Hall). But Hung's Sammo Law remains as celibate as a monk. If *NYPD Blue*'s plus-size Dennis Franz can do love scenes, why can't the equally well-rounded Hung?

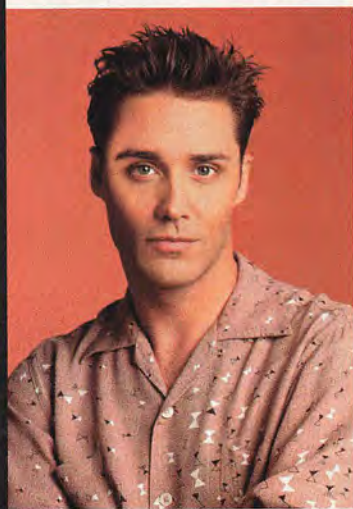
BEVERLY HILLS 90210 should resolve to get rid of Vincent Young's Noah. Now that Luke Perry's Dylan McKay is back on the show, there's not enough room for two brooding rebels. With his spiky hairdo and hoarse whisper of a voice, Young suggests a mini Michael



SPEEDMAN



LOVITZ



REBEL REBEL Is *90210*'s angry Young (l.) morphing into *Vengeance*'s Madsen?

Madsen—and we get more than enough of him on ABC's *Vengeance Unlimited*.

FELICITY should resolve to buy Ben Covington (Scott Speedman) a pair of glasses. The guy is always squinting. Does he think this looks sexy? Then again, considering that Keri Russell's title character can't seem to decide between squirrely Ben and dreamy resident adviser Noel (Scott Foley), maybe it's Felicity who needs the specs.

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS: PRIMETIME should resolve to rethink its censorship policies. A recent installment featured footage of the upper portion of a severed female cadaver. But the images had been digitally altered so that you couldn't see the corpse's nipples. Guess that would have offended *Guinness* fans' delicate sensibilities—yeah, like bare areolas are more disturbing than, say, a 303-pound tumor.

>> Talk about your favorite TV shows at www.ew.com <<

SOUND BITES

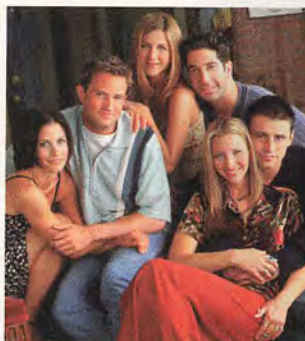
"A woman is suing McDonald's claiming that she found a condom in her chicken sandwich. A spokesman for McDonald's said, 'That's just our new sandwich: the McRibbed.'" **CONAN O'BRIEN** on *Late Night*

"Cigarette maker R.J. Reynolds announced they will lay off an additional 1,000 workers. They had some of the laid-off workers on TV tonight, and they were pretty choked up. Which is what happens when you only have one lung." **JAY LENO** on *The Tonight Show*

"A new study listed the cities with the most cases of syphilis and gonorrhea.... New York wasn't even in the top 20. New York's murder rate is down. Times Square is family-friendly. New York has become your crazy drinking buddy who got married and had kids." **COLIN QUINN** on *SNL*

"Although it's clear these [were] U.N.-sponsored retaliatory strikes, conspiracy theorists have already begun asking why the U.S. only seems to bomb when CNN is around."

CRAIG KILBORN on *The Daily Show*



WINNER OF THE WEEK

'Friends'

The sitcom has become the master of *Seinfeld*'s domain with syndicated reruns besting repeats of Jerry & Co. for the first time since their September debut.

LOSER OF THE WEEK

'Conrad Bloom'

Call it downsizing. NBC's freshman workplace comedy got shelved and will be replaced by the two-year-old corporate-drone sitcom *Working*. Question is, will anybody but payroll notice the difference?

THE RATINGS

LOOK: 'WHOSE' BACK

AFTER MAKING some ratings noise during its short summer run, the Drew Carey-hosted *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* (27th) returned to the ABC lineup with a bang. The improv-comedy showcase not only finished first in its time slot but even drew 300,000 more 18- to 49-year-olds than Fox's demo-friendly *Party of Five* (59th). In its first head-to-head matchup, NBC's *Will & Grace* (28th) squeaked past ABC's *Sports Night* (37th) in both total viewers and adults 18-49. NBC had its most dominant Thursday this season with its holiday-themed Must See episodes, while CBS, thanks to such solid efforts as *JAG* (10th), *Everybody Loves Raymond* (12th), and *Walker, Texas Ranger* (15th), will ring in the New Year as the most-watched TV network for the first time since '92.

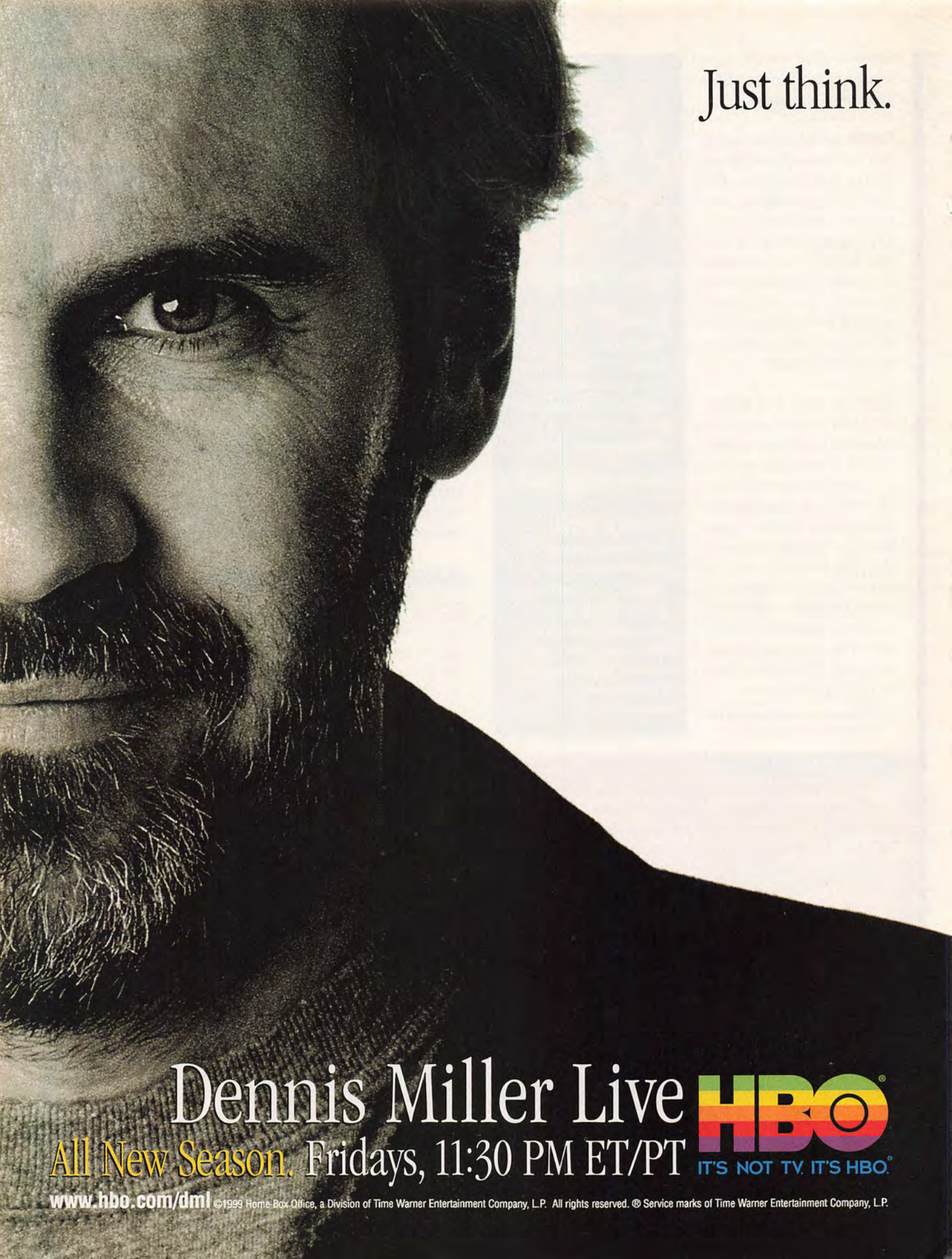


CAREY ON (From left) Greg Proops, the host, Ryan Stiles

TOP 30

		VIEWERS*		LAST WEEK
1	30.0	ER NBC, Thursday, 10 p.m.	1	
2	25.0	FRASIER NBC, Thursday, 9 p.m.	2	
3	23.7	FRIENDS NBC, Thursday, 8 p.m.	3	
4	20.2	VERONICA'S CLOSET NBC, Thursday, 9:30 p.m.	5	
5	19.7	JESSE NBC, Thursday, 8:30 p.m.	7	
6	19.6	MOVIE: BORROWED HEARTS (R) CBS, Sunday, 9 p.m.	—	
7	18.1	NYPD BLUE ABC, Tuesday, 10 p.m.	9	
8	16.7	FOOTBALL: LIONS VS. 49ERS ABC, Monday, 8 p.m.	—	
9	16.6	TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL (R) CBS, Sunday, 8 p.m.	6	
10	16.4	JAG CBS, Tuesday, 8 p.m.	28	
11	16.0	60 MINUTES CBS, Sunday, 7 p.m.	20	
12	15.9	EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND CBS, Monday, 9 p.m.	15	
13	15.5	THE DREW CAREY SHOW ABC, Wednesday, 9 p.m.	11	
14	15.1	ALLY McBEAL Fox, Monday, 9 p.m.	—	
15	13.9	BECKER CBS, Monday, 9:30 p.m.	17	
	13.9	COSBY CBS, Monday, 8 p.m.	35	
	13.9	THE SIMPSONS Fox, Sunday, 8 p.m.	18	
	13.9	WALKER, TEXAS RANGER (R) CBS, Saturday, 10 p.m.	13	
19	13.7	SPIN CITY ABC, Tuesday, 9 p.m.	24	
20	13.6	JUST SHOOT ME NBC, Tuesday, 9 p.m.	40	
21	13.4	THE KING OF QUEENS CBS, Monday, 8:30 p.m.	37	
22	13.3	HOME IMPROVEMENT ABC, Tuesday, 8 p.m.	11	
23	12.8	NASH BRIDGES CBS, Friday, 10 p.m.	—	
24	12.7	DATeline NBC NBC, Monday, 10 p.m.	21	
	12.7	DIAGNOSIS MURDER CBS, Thursday, 9 p.m.	68	
26	12.6	SABRINA, THE TEENAGE WITCH (R) ABC, Friday, 9 p.m.	24	
27	12.4	WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY? ABC, Wednesday, 9:30 p.m.	22	
28	12.1	THE HUGHEYS ABC, Tuesday, 8:30 p.m.	30	
	12.1	WILL & GRACE NBC, Tuesday, 9:30 p.m.	—	
30	11.6	MARTIAL LAW CBS, Saturday, 9 p.m.	44	

*IN MILLIONS WEEK OF DEC. 14-20, 1998
(R) RERUN SOURCE: ABC CAPITAL



Just think.

Dennis Miller Live

All New Season. Fridays, 11:30 PM ET/PT



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WHAT to WATCH

A day-to-day guide to notable programs. Times are Eastern standard and are subject to change. by Mike Flaherty

MONDAY

January 4

SYNDICATED*

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE (TV-PG) Ezri discovers that even in space, family reunions

are an exercise in *agita* when she returns home to investigate O'Brien's disappearance.

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

SERIES DEBUT

8-8:30PM

ED, EDD N EDDY (Cartoon Network, TV-G) Three socially inept prepubescent losers suffer the tortures of suburbia in the Cartoon original.

8-10PM

THE WRONG GIRL (NBC, TV-14) We hear that Barbara Mandrell's decided to toss her music career to become a full-time actress. She stars in the TV movie as a woman whose alcoholic son disappears after hooking up with a new psychopathic squeeze. Lotsa luck, Babs!

SERIES DEBUT

8-10PM

ON THE INSIDE (Discovery Channel, TV-G) A backstage peek at political, military, and cultural marvels. The series' premiere week spotlights U.S.-Soviet submarine intrigue, the Empire State Building, wild amusement-park rides, and Air Force One.

4-4:30PM*

ZOOM (PBS, TV-Y) PBS' revisit of the beloved '70s imagination-fest is an absolute delight. Other than some slight '90s-ization (www.pbs.org is plugged several times), the new *Zoom* sticks to what worked before: normal and curious kids playing games (how long can we keep a feather in the air?) and building stuff (let's make a tower out of straws and clay). With nary a child-star ego in its exceptionally endearing cast, it's thoughtful, easygoing fun. **A**

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

—Kristen Baldwin

The Guest List



Look Who's on The Couch This Week

(SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

JOHN TRAVOLTA

JAY LENO Monday Val Kilmer, Felicity Huffman
Tuesday Newt Gingrich, Emily Watson
Wednesday Michael Caine, Cate Blanchett
Thursday Dennis Miller, James Van Der Beek
Friday John Travolta, Tracey Ullman

DAVID LETTERMAN Monday Sarah Jessica Parker, comedian Bryan Callen Tuesday David Remnick, comedian Greg Behrendt Wednesday Mira Sorvino, Terry Bradshaw Thursday Lisa Kudrow, comedian Jason Kuller Friday Robert Duvall, Jon Stewart

ROSIE O'DONNELL Monday John Travolta, musical guest Amanda Marshall Tuesday Robert Duvall Wednesday Benjamin Bratt Thursday Lisa Kudrow, Broadway's *Fosse* cast Friday Mira Sorvino

THE VIEW Monday Montel Williams Tuesday James Woods Thursday Musical guest Queen Latifah Friday Jane Seymour

POLITICALLY INCORRECT Tuesday Morgan Fairchild, Dan Cortese Wednesday Comedian Elayne Boosler Thursday Vicki Lawrence, James Coburn, Dee Dee Myers Friday Dick Clark, Deborah Harry

CONAN O'BRIEN Monday Jon Stewart, Annabella Sciorra (R) Tuesday Chazz Palminteri Wednesday Michael Madsen, Penn & Teller Thursday Melina Kanakaredes (*Providence*) Friday Lisa Kudrow

TUESDAY

January 5

8-9PM

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER (The WB, TV-14-LSV) Bone up on *Buffy* lore with "Faith, Hope & Trick," the one where she endures a cloven-hoofed demon and a cloying new pal. (R)

9-10PM

HIGHLANDER (Sci-Fi Channel, TV-PG-V) Rescuing the time-traveling actioner from syndication, Sci-Fi starts a chronological re-airing.

9-11PM

IN MY SISTER'S SHADOW (CBS, TV-PG-V) Nancy McKeon plays a woman who falls for her sister's ex, who

happens to be—yup—nuts. That'll teach her to take sloppy seconds.

10-11PM

NYPD BLUE (ABC, TV-14-LS) The pump's on the other foot when Kirkendall tries to spare her murder-witness son from testifying.



HAVE YOU SEEN HIM LATELY?

9-10PM

THE SINATRA KIDNAPPING (A&E, TV-PG) An *E!* *True Hollywood Story* by any other name, the *American Justice* ep recalls the 1963 abduction of Frank Sinatra Jr. (above center with Frank and mom Nancy Barbato) in all its absurdity. (Its pill-popping mastermind had first planned to nab Bob Hope but decided that would be unpatriotic.) Although he was ultimately returned unharmed, suspicions that the whole thing was a publicity stunt ruined Junior's crooning career. That's life, eh? **B**

JEFF DUNN

CORRIG-BETTMANN

WEDNESDAY

January 6

8-9PM

DAWSON'S CREEK (The WB, TV-14-DL) Gawd, could Dawson be more insensitive to Joey's artistic talent?! And who does that bitch Tamara think she is, returning to Capeside just when Pacey and Andie are hooking up? *Whatevrr!* (R)

SEASON PREMIERE

9-9:30PM

LATELINE (NBC, TV-14) Pearce becomes a walking punchline after his appearances on *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*. Yes, Conan and Andie guest-star.

9-10PM*

THE LINE KING: THE AL HIRSCHFELD STORY (PBS, TV-PG) You may not recognize the name, but you've surely beheld any number of the caricaturist's distinctive celebrity portraits. Come on in and let *American Masters* show you his etchings.

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

9-10PM

CHARMED (The WB, TV-14-DL) Apparently she values the men in her life more than the life in her men: Piper gets the vapors for a murdered man's ghost and tries to save his soul from damnation. (R)

10-11PM

CHICAGO HOPE (CBS, TV-14) Get a good look at John Glover before he went to hell: This rerun guest-stars the *Brimstone* Beelzebub as an eccentric artist who sits down with Adam Arkin's Dr. Shutt for a psychiatric analysis. (R)

10:30-11:30PM

OUT AT WORK (HBO, TV-MA) *America Undercover* takes deft, withering aim at homophobia in the workplace, as ex-servicewoman Grethe Cammermeyer narrates three nightmarish tales from the worlds of finance, fast food, and auto manufacturing.



FROM NORTH TO SOUTH, AND BACK AGAIN

10-11PM*

RIVER OF SONG (PBS) That would be the Mississippi, but the four-part documentary, which traces the Big Muddy's role as the cradle of nearly every strain of American music, forgoes a sepia-toned history lesson for present-day expressions of that heritage. (Its stress on the contemporary probably explains the selection of singer-songwriter Ani DiFranco as its narrator.) Part 1 begins the top-to-bottom (geographically speaking) survey in Minnesota, visiting chanting Chippewa Indians, Scandinavian fiddlers, Laotian reed pipers, and Twin Cities post-punkers Soul Asylum. And a long, strange trip begins. **B+** (Airs through Jan. 27.)

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

THEO PELLETIER

THURSDAY

January 7

8-8:30PM

FRIENDS (NBC, TV-PG) *Murphy Brown's* Joe Regalbuto directs "The One With All the Resolutions." To wit, Joey



WISHING FOR KEVORKIAN

takes up the guitar, with some thanks-for-nothing help from taskmaster Phoebe; Rachel decides to stop gossiping; and Chandler vows to restrain himself from goofing on his pals.

NEW NIGHT

9-10PM

CUPID (ABC, TV-PG-L) Hmm, could ABC be detecting a chink in the mighty Must See armor, awarding the critically swooned-over upstart weeknight wings?

9-11PM

HUDSON RIVER BLUES (Romance Classics) *Ally McBeal's* Jane Krakowski (above, far right) stars as a man-crazy busybody (what a stretch) in this tepid family drama. Among those gathered together to celebrate dotty Grandpa's 80th: a workaholic lawyer so obsessed with making partner that she keeps her cell phone handy while making love with her neglected hubby; a sister (*thirtysomething's* Polly Draper, right center), who traipses through the house sans pants; and their hippie mom, a sculptor who just happens to specialize in bare backsides. Uggh. **D**

—Shawna Malcom

9-9:30PM

FRASIER (NBC, TV-PG) Young Frederick's visit to Seattle comes just in time for him to see his dad lose faith in the power of good deeds and get arrested for giving a ride to a prostitute.

9-10:30PM

STEEL CITY (Bravo, TV-PG) *Riverdance* meets *Stomp* meets *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk* as Aussie Dien Perry leads his industrial-strength, 14-member tap troupe in a sneak preview of their upcoming U.S. tour.

9-10PM

FOX FILES (Fox) Host Jon Scott ventures to South Africa to remind us that racially motivated violence remains even after apartheid's end. On a lighter note (kinda) is a look at a new breed of sanity-challenged motorcycle daredevils.

9-10:30PM*

MYSTERY! (PBS, TV-PG-V) Hey, Abbott! Derek Jacobi's gumshoe monk takes one last spin around Shrewsbury Abbey as his *Cadfael* embarks on its last season.

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

10-11PM

ER (NBC, TV-14) It's about time they got rocking Gloria Reuben back into action. Her Jeanie mulls over returning to the dating scene. Meanwhile, Greene gets to know Lee (Mare Winningham) better and trust her less, while Carter frets that he may have contracted TB.

10-11PM

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS WITH JOAN LUNDEN (ABC) Our intrepid reporter goes for a joyride in a U2 spy plane and peeks behind the curtains of the jaw-dropping *Cirque du Soleil*.

WHAT TO WATCH

FRIDAY

January 8

SERIES DEBUT

8-9PM

PARAMEDICS (TLC, TV-PG)

Like putting its *Trauma: Life in the ER* on wheels,



SEASON PREMIERE

TLC's new offering profiles doctor-on-the-spot units, starting with tonight's look at a Tampa team.

8-10PM

THE LADY WITH THE TORCH (Encore, TV-G) Perhaps taking its cue from Warner Bros.' *No Guts, No Glory* series, the Glenn Close-hosted special celebrates Columbia Pictures' 75th birthday with a slew of classic clips.

9-10PM

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (CBS, TV-14-V) The Western returns (thanks partly to an Internet campaign by its fans) in force, as a by-the-book federal marshal takes over the town, outlawing guns and leaving it helpless against a band of arson-minded cattle ranchers. This, of course, will not stand, as even Mary (Laurie Holden, above) takes aim against the baddies. Keep your eyes peeled for a bodacious cameo by *NYPD Blue*'s Lola Glaudini as a helpful whore. **B+**

SATURDAY

January 9

7-8:30PM

THE BRAVE LITTLE TOASTER GOES TO MARS (Disney Channel, TV-G) Farrah Fawcett (starring as Faucet—get it?), Fyvush Finkel (just back from the shelved *Fantasy Island*), and Wayne Knight give voice to a band of household appliances in the animated adventure.



THAT SYNC-ING FEELING

9-11PM

SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE (Bravo, TV-PG) A rare TV treat, George Roy Hill's chilling 1972 adaptation of Kurt Vonnegut's dystopian masterpiece stars Michael Sacks, Ron Leibman, and Eugene Roche.

9-10PM

THE PRETENDER (NBC, TV-PG) Talk about your school of hard knocks.... Jarod substitutes for a murdered criminology professor in the hope of sussing out which of his students is a killer.

NOON-12:30PM
ULTRA SOUND: REVENGE OF THE BOY BANDS (MTV) Just because the MTV News special addresses the likes of the New Kids on the Block, Backstreet Boys, and 'N Sync (above) doesn't mean that it should be as superficial and uninspired as their multiplatinum warblings. We do learn that such knicker-knotting ensembles will be with us as long as there are calculating Svengalis, little girls, and a cable channel eager to shove them down our throats. **C**

SUNDAY

January 10



WE RECKON YOU OUGHTA BE WATCHING

8-9PM

INSIDE THE ACTORS

STUDIO (Bravo, TV-PG) Sharon Stone sits down (cross-legged, we hope) with James Lipton and relates how she triumphed over bombshell-dom to achieve thespianic cred.

8-10PM

MURDER IN A SMALL TOWN (A&E, TV-G) A&E enters the original-film arena with *Murder*, starring (and cowritten by) Gene Wilder as a Broadway director-turned-sleuth who investigates his wife's death in sleepy Stamford, Conn.

SNEAK PREVIEW

8:30-9PM

THE PJS (Fox) High tech meets lowlife in Eddie Murphy's "foamation" comedy about a building super (voiced by Murphy) and his family. (Moves to its regular time slot on Jan. 12.)

9-10PM

LEIF GARRETT: BEHIND THE MUSIC (VH1, TV-PG) The flaxen-haired pretty boy recalls: "I was gonna be Mick Jagger, I was gonna be Robert Plant, but that's not the way it went." Instead, he became the king of understatement.

8-10PM

PURGATORY (TNT, TV-PG-LV) Moodily directed by Uli Edel (*Rasputin*), this metaphysical Western casts Eric Roberts (above) as Blackjack, a varmint so heartless he won't put his dying brother out of his misery because he can't spare the bullet. Pursued by a posse, Blackjack leads his band of outlaws to a mysterious ghost town (and we mean that literally). Roberts makes for a surprisingly believable gunslinger, and Sam Shepard is dead-on as the laconic town sheriff. *Purgatory* isn't the best Western TNT has ever produced (that'd be 1995's *The Desperate Trail*, with Linda Fiorentino) but for hard-bitten horse opera fans, it's heaven-sent. **B+** —BF

SERIES DEBUT

9-10PM

THE SOPRANOS (HBO, TV-MA) What happens when you cross *7th Heaven* with *GoodFellas*? The dramedy stars James Gandolfini as a mafioso juggling a legitimate business and a difficult family with a little help from his therapist(!), played by Lorraine Bracco.



WATER ON THE BRAIN Lightweight star vehicles like 1961's *Blue Hawaii* didn't bring Presley respect

forth the second and final volume of the singer's story, **Careless Love: The Unmaking of Elvis Presley**, picking up two years after he left off. Presley, now 25, is ready to reenter civilian life—that is, to resubmerge himself in the maelstrom of the stardom created by his musical breakthrough and the entrepreneurial machinations of his manager, Colonel Tom Parker. As Guralnick begins, Parker

has booked Presley to record an album that will become *Elvis Is Back*, to appear on a TV special to be called *Frank Sinatra's Welcome Home Party for Elvis Presley*, and to go into production on a movie, *G.I. Blues*.

That only the album—a fine collection of bluesy rock—proved worth Presley's effort is the ominous start of the “unmaking” in Guralnick's title. And while Guralnick in his author's note avers that “the story of Elvis' inexorable decline...is neither a simple nor a monolithic one,” that's precisely what the biographer's meticulousness and honesty turn his book into. The reasons for Presley's downfall are indeed simple and monolithic: With a couple of glorious exceptions, his work in music and film became banal and repetitious—a betrayal of his early promise and achievement.

Obligated by his sense of thoroughness, Guralnick drags us through the filming of every one of Presley's schlocky movies. *Clambake*, *Roustabout*, and *Speedway* sound even deadlier to make than they are to watch, which is really saying something. What



Heartbreak Hotel

In *Careless Love*, the riveting second volume of his definitive Elvis Presley biography, Peter Guralnick artfully traces the sad, prolonged decline of the rock & roll legend. **by Ken Tucker**

FOUR YEARS AGO, PETER Guralnick published *Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley*, a serious, meticulous, explosively entertaining biography that traced Presley's family lineage, musi-

cal influences, and the rising arc of his career as the avatar of rock & roll. That volume, by far the most comprehensive rendering of Presley's early life amid the scores of books written about him—

and a pungent rebuke to Albert Goldman's oily 1991 anti-biography, *Elvis*—stopped when Presley was 23, at a peak of popularity, and freshly enlisted in the Army.

Now Guralnick has brought



NEW in Paperback

Wasted Marya Hornbacher
(HarperPerennial, \$13, first
published in 1998)

Terrifically well written
and nonjudgmental account
of the author's harrowing
struggle with eating
disorders.

E-Male Jeff Chacon and
Anthony Reynoso (Acumen
House, \$12.95, 1999)

Thirtysomething men slip
into gossipy-housewife
mode in this entertaining
epistolary tale composed
of e-mail messages.

Asian Pop Cinema Lee
Server (Chronicle, \$16.95,
1999) Succinct reviews and
interviews with major
players like John Woo
pepper this detailed
chronicle of the burgeoning
Asian film industry.

Bob the Gambler
Frederick Barthelme
(Mariner, \$12, 1997) Middle-
class couple lose financial
stability but find happiness
in this engaging novel.

could Guralnick have done to make this tedious material more lively to read about? He might have offered more pointed interpretations of the work, I suppose, but that would call for him to assume the sort of critic's role that Guralnick has always assiduously avoided. He surely could have dealt with all the bad movies and bad soundtrack songs more succinctly.

But the other aspects of Presley's life weren't all that interesting either; hung as he was in a kind of drug-addled limbo. When not working, he occupied himself having pillow fights with soon-to-be-wife Priscilla, dating other girls with notable awkwardness ("He was so retarded," says one dissatisfied vixen), practicing karate, collecting sheriffs' badges, seeing Stalin's face in a cloud, and contemplating becoming a monk. But mostly the increasingly bored, frustrated singer kept himself medicated on amphetamines and painkillers as well as what he called "attacks" (Demerol, Seconal, Valmid, etc.) prescribed by the notoriously obliging "Dr. Nick," Dr. George Nichopoulos.

Guralnick's research unearthed good stuff at regular intervals. For example, in addition to learning that Presley's healthiest addiction was to *Monty Python's Flying Circus* reruns (he could do whole routines by heart), it was news to me that Presley had wanted to portray his country-music equivalent, Hank Williams, in a movie—a jolting notion that came to nought. And the chapter on Presley's galvanizing 1968 NBC TV special is fascinating; Guralnick reveals the enormous amount of rehearsal behind the production, which was presented as an off-the-cuff jam session.

But mostly what Guralnick is obliged to chronicle in *Careless Love* is the story of a man who gave up his creative life for the security of wealth and unquestioning friends. Cut off from the world by his trust in the Colonel, who never wanted his charge to become a feisty, independent entity like the Beatles, Presley became

paranoid (he kept an anti-American enemies list that included the Fab Four, Jane Fonda, and the Smothers Brothers) and pathetic (he contracted iritis in his eyes from the black dye he used on his eyebrows). Where *Last Train to Memphis* spoke of a miracle—how an

impoverished young man became a revolutionary artist and a king of popular culture—*Careless Love* documents the life of a sheltered bore who turned his miracle into a tragedy as well as a joke. Guralnick tells that joke with eloquent sorrow and muted poignance. **A-**

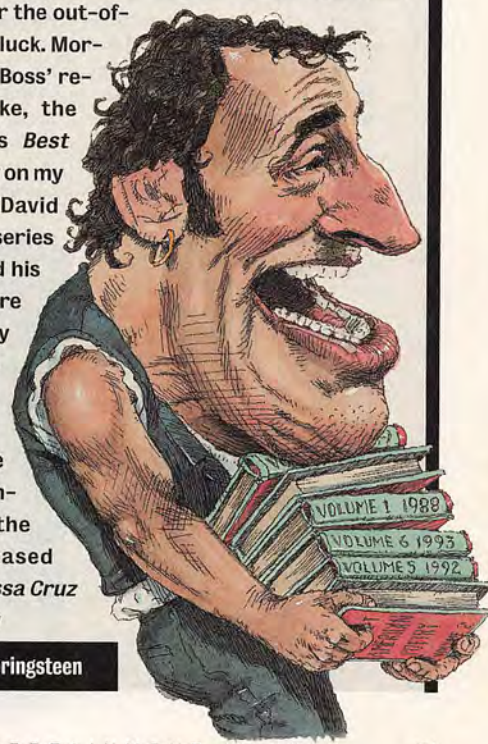
BETWEEN THE LINES

The inside scoop on the book world

■ **LIVING LARGE** HarperSanFrancisco is hoping the frequent mentions of Epictetus in **Tom Wolfe's** blockbuster *A Man in Full* will spark renewed interest in the philosopher's writings. The publisher has spearheaded a publicity push for two of his titles, *A Manual for Living* and *The Art of Living*. There's even a Wolfe-Epictetus link on Amazon.com. "They're not reissues. It's a re-promotion thanks to Tom Wolfe," says spokesperson Meg Lenihan. As to why the musings of a first-century Roman would strike a chord in the '90s, *Living* translator Sharon Lebell says, "I don't think people are interested in ecstasy or transcendence anymore. They want to know how they can get through the day with dignity, grace, and style." Quick, get Bill Clinton a copy!

■ **METER READER** A few months ago, Scribner editor Jake Morrissey received an unusual request: **Bruce Springsteen**, a huge fan of the popular *Best American Poetry* anthology series, had been unable to find the first six books (1988–93); could Scribner supply him with the missing volumes? Members of Springsteen's staff had searched for the out-of-print volumes with no luck. Morrissey forwarded the Boss' request to Gillian Blake, the editor who oversees *Best American*. "I had a few on my shelves," she says. "David Lehman, founder and series editor of *BAP*, supplied his own copy of the very rare first volume, edited by **John Ashbery**." Blake hasn't yet heard back from Springsteen, but she learned from the intermediary who contacted Scribner that the singer was "very pleased and grateful." —Clarissa Cruz and Carmela Ciuraru

POET LOVER'S CORNER Springsteen



The Week

Nonfiction

IN THE HOUSE: THE REAL WORLD SEATTLE James Solomon (MTV Books, \$18) Hasn't the glossy, overhyped voyeurism gone far enough? The outrageously popular TV series about a group of seven strangers picked to live together has gone into its *seventh* season, bringing forth a whole new generation of attractive, self-absorbed Gen-Xers for many an interminable *Real World* marathon to come. Nevertheless, fans eager for backstage morsels about Janet, Lindsay, Stephen, et al., won't be disappointed in this suitably glossy, overhyped book. Among the info gleaned: that David did laundry *once* during the entire five-month shoot, and calendar pages were used in lieu of toilet paper. Ick. **C+** —Clarissa Cruz

NUREYEV: HIS LIFE Diane Solway (Morrow, \$27.50) This absorbing biography of Rudolf Nureyev, the legendary ballet dancer who became an international media sensation at the height of the Cold War when he dramatically fled the Soviet Union to defect to the West, gracefully blends epic sweep with human-scale insight. Solway's equi-

table account never fawns or veers as she probes the will to dance that propelled a peasant boy from oppressive Stalinist Russia to cosmopolitan superstar. Tracing everything from his stormy lifelong relationship with rival dancer Erik Bruhn and his symbiotic partnership with Dame Margot Fonteyn to his bold promiscuity and his final battle against age and AIDS, the book's clear sense of the idiosyncratic transcends the political at every turn. **A** —Charles Winecoff

UNCOLLECTING CHEEVER: THE FAMILY OF JOHN CHEEVER VS. ACADEMY CHICAGO PUBLISHERS Anita Miller (Rowman & Littlefield, \$27.95) In 1987 a small indie publishing house, owned by the author, approached the family of John Cheever with a proposal to print a volume of his "uncollected stories." The family agreed, and things proceeded—for a few months, at least. Then the Cheevers claimed they had been misled as to the extent of the book (they thought it would be a small scholarly volume as opposed to a mass-market hardcover) and attempted to break their contract. They all ended up in court, and ultimately the Supreme Court of Illi-

BOUND FOR GLORY

THE SECOND ANGEL Philip Kerr (Holt, \$25) Take 2001, cross it with *And the Band Played On*, and you'll have some idea of the basic plotline of this dystopian sci-fi thriller: The year is 2069, humanity is divided between a healthy, wealthy few and a mass of rabble infected with a fatal blood-borne virus, curable only by complete transfusion. Clean blood is the most valuable currency on earth, which is why the biggest blood bank in the universe is located on the moon (along with a notorious penal colony and a number of sex hotels). An entire industry has grown up around protecting said bank, and the best designer of protection both virtual and real is a "clean" genius called Dallas, cherished employee of Terotech, beloved husband, and, unfortunately, father of a very sick baby daughter: Dallas' daughter is his Achilles' heel, and when his boss discovers her problem, murder and mayhem ensue—thanks to Terotech's truly evil head of security. Forced to go AWOL from his job and his life, Dallas teams up with a motley

crew of criminal bad bloods (all of whom, surprise, surprise, have good hearts) and plots a Robin Hood-like revenge: He'll steal blood from the rich to sell to the poor. Aiding him is not just his merry corporeal band, but an unexpected (by our hero if not by the reader) inhuman source. Kerr's vision of the future is detailed, depressingly dark, and utterly absorbing. **A-** —Vanessa V. Friedman



WORLD WEARY Only die-hard fans will want to take this trip to Seattle

nois decided in favor of the Cheevers. Now Anita Miller has taken it upon herself to tell the "right" side of the story. Not that she says so, of course; she says she wants to warn the literary community of a legal decision that threatens all small presses. This is a valid point, but unfortunately, while she begins the book with convincing restraint, she ends by taking petty potshots at her opponents. **B-** —VVF

WITH OSSIE & RUBY Ossie Davis & Ruby Dee (Morrow, \$25) Coinciding with the thespian couple's 50th wedding anniversary, this joint autobiography is both a theater memoir and a personal account of the 20th-century African-American experience. Alternating chapters, they chronicle their unwavering struggle against racism (and friendships with Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X), the pressures of holding together a showbiz marriage (they quickly abandoned their open-marriage experiment), the limited roles for black actors (Dee played Sidney Poitier's wife five times), and their own resourcefulness in creating artistic opportunities. Dee's novelistic details and haunting memories make her half the more compelling, but together the pair give testament to the rewards of a lifetime spent honoring commitments. **B+** —Beth Johnson

ADIOS, BARBIE Ophira Edut, ed. (Seal Press, \$14.95) What do you do for an encore if you launched a national women's magazine at age 19? Detroit native Ophira Edut followed up her editorial career at

the alterna-hit *Hues* magazine by publishing *Adios*, *Barbie* right before her 26th birthday. A collection of personal essays by 27 forthright females—such as Rebecca Walker and Susan Jane Gilman—*Adios* blasts past Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* as it examines the detrimental effects of our collective adoration for Barbie. "In a culture still mesmerized by an unnatural beauty standard, these simple tales of self-acceptance are heroic deeds, brave acts of resistance," Edut writes in the introduction. Big noses, wide butts, too much flab, kinky hair, dark skin. These are the realities Barbie never knew, but they're celebrated here in intimate detail. **B+** —Lori L. Tharps

REPORTING LIVE Lesley Stahl (Simon & Schuster, \$26) Tellingly, this memoir of a high-profile career in the chauvinistic rat race of CBS News is organized by the presidencies of the last 25 years rather than by personal milestones. Stahl's vivid, edgy account of her tough ascent from Dan Schorr's Watergate backup "slave" to chief White House correspondent to Diane Sawyer's replacement on *60 Minutes* ("I was the OB—the other blonde") makes cursory concessions to her home life as the wife of a clinically depressed writer, Aaron Latham (*Urban Cowboy*), and her private insecurities as a workaholic babe in a man's world ("Deep down I must have thought I was my hair"). With near ruthless abandon, she always manages to put the news first. Not that there's anything wrong with that. **B+** —CW



STUPID HUMAN TRICK OF THE WEEK

'The Art of Spooning'

The authors have somehow written a 64-page book on this bedtime habit. "What if the butts don't line up just right?" they ask. There are some things we'd rather not know.

Fiction

PEARS ON A WILLOW TREE Leslie Pietrzyk (*Bard*, \$23) Newly married Rose emigrates from Poland to Detroit in 1919 with her husband, bringing her Old World dowry—"eight pillowcases, four sets of bed-sheets, twelve napkins, three tablecloths, ten feet of bobbin lace, two feather quilts," the clothes on her back, and an awful lot of patience and New World hope. Rose, her daughter, Helen, granddaughter, Ginger, and great-granddaughter, Amy, narrate their own stories in turn. Pietrzyk's debut novel, inspired by her own grandmother's

pierogi recipe, is a kitchen tale—all women, no men—but satisfying nonetheless. **B** —Daneet Steffens

THE VINTNER'S LUCK Elizabeth Knox (*Farrar, Straus & Giroux*, \$23) In this dark and erotic "angel" novel, Sobran Jodeau, a handsome young vineyard heir in 19th-century France, literally stumbles into the arms of a beautiful, irreverent, black-haired male angel named Xas. Devout Sobran assumes that the dazzling celestial being is his guardian angel and agrees to yearly counsel with him. Their annual rendezvous—interwoven with Sobran's marriage, fatherhood, and wine-making success—turn inexorably sexual, as Xas and Sobran fall in love, even while Xas' "fallen" nature is revealed. Daringly exploring the spiritual worth of sensual pleasure, New Zealand writer Knox's imaginative, imagistic tale soars. **A-** —Megan Harlan

WORD Coerte V.W. Felske (*Warner*, \$24) While compiling amusing lingo describing L.A.'s fame-seeking "Wannabeasts"—such as noguls (powerless moguls) and Wams (waitress-actress-models)—Felske (*The Shallow Man*) goes one shallower in this tedious Hollywood morality tale. Shy Überproducer Sydney Swinburn approaches struggling screenwriter and manic social classifier Heyward Hoon with a Faustian bargain: Heyward will pimp his beautiful gal pals to Sydney in exchange for career glory. Even if you suspend disbelief (studio honchos lacking for hot dates?), Felske cheapens the deal with the novel's version of a laugh track (hysterical mirth greets narrator Heyward's every odd comment) and characters as superficially rendered as Heyward's tiresome buzzwords. **C** —MH

>> More reviews in EW Special Edition at www.ew.com <<

THE BROWSER

Opening lines from recently published books

"On my twenty-fifth birthday, my mother gave me a man." From *Pink Slip* (Delacorte, \$22.95) by RITA CIRESI

"A night dark beyond emergency. The waves, rising skyward, have begun to tear at the beach, carrying away trash cans and blankets and here and there a door. Wood skids float off, riderless life rafts wheeling in the boil. The checkerboard of houselights in the Luna Park projects dims, flickers off, then back on. Sparks rain from the elevated tracks where the F train has stopped..." From *Blood Acre* (Viking, \$23.95) by PETER LANDESMAN

BEST-SELLERS

'BIBLE' THUMPER

THE FOURTH TIME'S the charm for Barbara Kingsolver, whose latest effort is her most well-received and complex novel to date. An ambitious departure from her Southwestern-flavored best-sellers, *The Bean Trees* and *Animal Dreams*, *The Poisonwood Bible* is an unsettling account of a missionary family transplanted to the Belgian Congo in the 1950s—and one of the rare critical and commercial darlings of 1998 (six pressruns have 300,000 copies in print). Meanwhile, the battle of the network news anchors heats up with Tom Brokaw's and Peter Jennings' retrospective tomes duking it out on the nonfiction list. Stay tuned...

BARBARA
KINGSOLVER
The
Poisonwood
Bible

FICTION

WEEKS ON LIST

- 1 **A MAN IN FULL** Tom Wolfe, *Farrar, Straus & Giroux*, \$28.95 6
- 2 **RAINBOW SIX** Tom Clancy, *Putnam*, \$27.95 19
- 3 **BAG OF BONES** Stephen King, *Scribner*, \$28 12
- 4 **THE SIMPLE TRUTH** David Baldacci, *Warner*, \$25 4
- 5 **WHEN THE WIND BLOWS** James Patterson, *Little, Brown*, \$25 7
- 6 **THE VAMPIRE ARMAND** Anne Rice, *Knopf*, \$26.95 9
- 7 **MIRROR IMAGE** Danielle Steel, *Delacorte*, \$26.95 6
- 8 **THE POISONWOOD BIBLE** Barbara Kingsolver, *HarperCollins*, \$27.50 10
- 9 **ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT** Mary Higgins Clark, *Simon & Schuster*, \$17 9
- 10 **MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA** Arthur Golden, *Knopf*, \$25 55

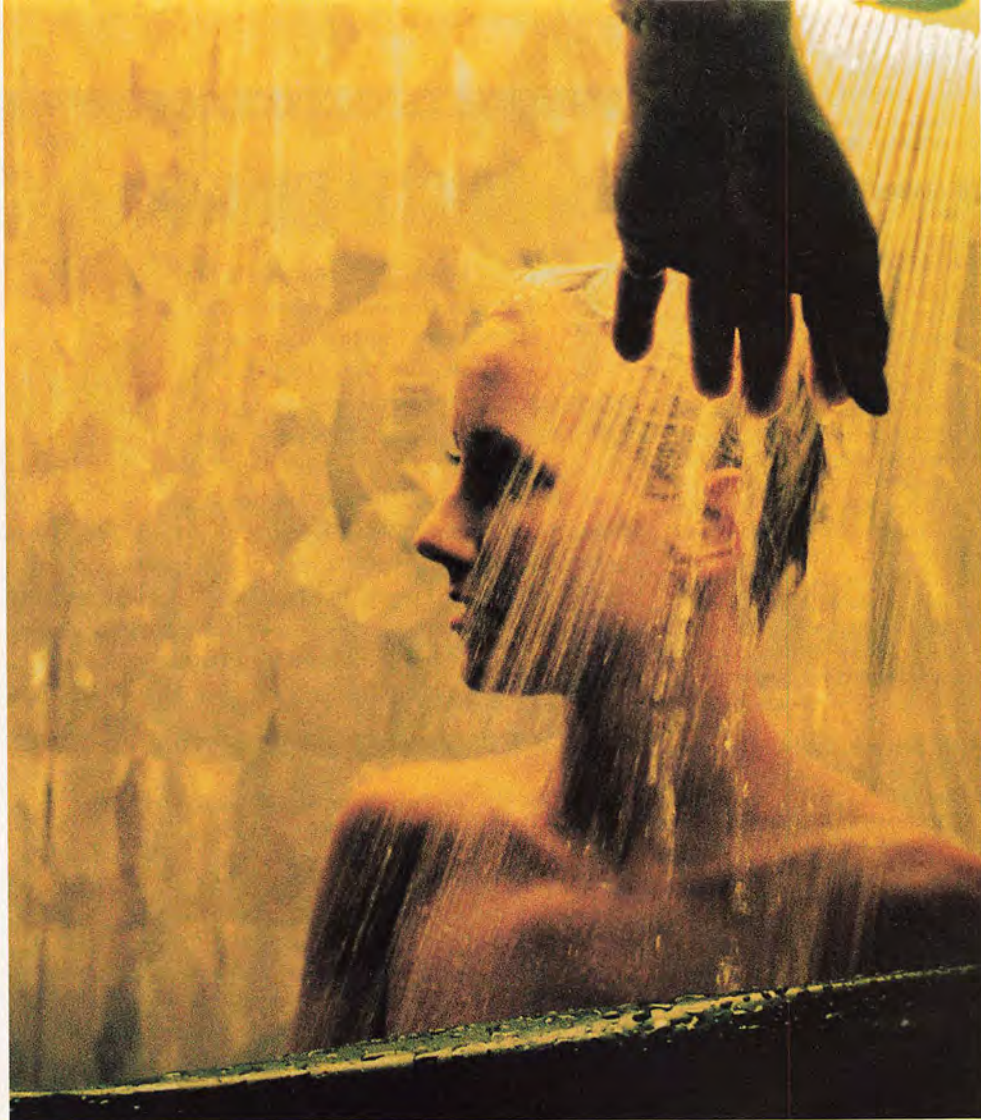
NONFICTION

- 1 **THE GREATEST GENERATION** Tom Brokaw, *Random House*, \$24.95 2
- 2 **THE CENTURY** Peter Jennings and Todd Brewster, *Doubleday*, \$60 4
- 3 **TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE** Mitch Albom, *Doubleday*, \$19.95 59
- 4 **THE 9 STEPS TO FINANCIAL FREEDOM** Suze Orman, *Crown*, \$23 39
- 5 **BLIND MAN'S BLUFF** Sherry Sontag and Christopher Drew 3
with Annette L. Drew, *Public Affairs*, \$25
- 6 **FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME** Michael Jordan, *Crown*, \$50 7
- 7 **THE PROFESSOR AND THE MADMAN** 8
Simon Winchester, *HarperCollins*, \$20
- 8 **IF LIFE IS A GAME, THESE ARE THE RULES** 13
Cherie Carter-Scott, *Broadway*, \$15
- 9 **CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD, BOOK 3** 5
Neale Donald Walsch, *Hampton Roads*, \$22.95
- 10 **SOMETHING MORE** Sarah Ban Breathnach, *Warner*, \$20 9

MASS-MARKET PAPERBACKS

- 1 **INNER HARBOR** Nora Roberts, *Jove*, \$7.50 1
- 2 **FEAR NOTHING** Dean Koontz, *Bantam*, \$7.99 2
- 3 **THE GHOST** Danielle Steel, *Dell*, \$7.50 6
- 4 **DR. ATKINS' NEW DIET REVOLUTION** 99
Robert C. Atkins, M.D., *Avon*, \$6.50
- 5 **TOM CLANCY'S POWER PLAYS: RUTHLESS.COM** 9
Tom Clancy and Martin Greenberg, *Berkley*, \$7.99
- 6 **THE WINNER** David Baldacci, *WarnerVision*, \$7.99 6
- 7 **INTO THIN AIR** Jon Krakauer, *Anchor*, \$7.99 36
- 8 **SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST** Jonathan Kellerman, *Bantam*, \$7.50 6
- 9 **THE PERFECT STORM** Sebastian Junger, *HarperPaperbacks*, \$6.99 28
- 10 **NUMBERED ACCOUNT** Christopher Reich, *Dell*, \$7.99 2

SOURCE: PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



Shower Hooks

The albums for *Psycho*, *Rugrats*, *South Park*, and *Velvet Goldmine* aim to return the original to "original soundtrack." by David Browne

COULD THERE BE AN EASIER gig than soundtrack compiler? From *The Waterboy* to *You've Got Mail*, most film-music discs have been reduced to oldies collections that were probably a cinch to assemble, not to mention fun—imagine playing DJ for millions. Yet the formula has grown stale faster than you can say "closing-credit power ballad." Thankfully, a few renegade soundtrack producers are shooting higher, com-

missioning new, untested material and performances and aiming for anthologies that are more than just K-tel compilations for the DVD era.

The tie-in disc to the remake of *Psycho* features portions of Bernard Herrmann's motel-hell score, faithfully re-created by Danny Elfman. But for the most part, the album focuses on new alt-rock and country material with an emphasis on the obvious—meaning songs

with "psycho" and "screaming" in their titles. The approach isn't exactly subtle; Steve Earle's Stonesy rocker "All of My Life" goes so far as to incorporate the still-jarring stabbing strings of the shower theme.

Yet just like many recent film-music supervisors, the *Psycho* team seems to think electronica will be the soundtrack music of the next century. Lending the album continuity are spectral trip-hop

and drum-and-bass—by newcomers Mono and Lamb and old-schoolers Pet Shop Boys—whose very chilly stillness cuts like a knife: Can't you picture Norman Bates unsuccessfully attempting to unwind to Thievery Corporation's "Honeymoon Suite"? Producer-DJ Howie B's techno sound collage "Once Is Not Enough" even incorporates samples of dialogue, transforming Vince Vaughn's creepy lines ("The kitchen's awful homey!") into passive-aggressive rapping.

Boomer parents who saw the original *Psycho* may no longer be spooked by the thought of taking a shower, but they've encountered something far scarier in their adult lives: their children's love of rap! The disposable but intermittently charming companion to **The Rugrats Movie** isn't likely to calm any of their anxieties. It kicks off with "Take Me There," a cute, singsongy slice of kid-hop featuring BLACKstreet and Ma\$e rapping about Chucky, Tommy, and their pals. Cuts by Busta Rhymes, Kev1 of 1000 Clowns, and Rakim and Danny Saber are denser and slightly more adult, but the message is clear: As much as classic-rock-rooted grown-ups may cringe, the rhymes and beats of hip-hop are truly child-friendly.

Apparently recognizing that the parents of today's tots were pogoing two decades ago, the *Rugrats* soundtrack also makes concessions to Mom and Dad's tastes. Elvis Costello contributes a new song, "I Throw My Toys Around" (a duet with No Doubt), a subject that speaks to kids and grown-ups alike; for the occasion, Costello returns to beautifully uptight Attractions mode. Graying

new wavers may also be soothed by contributions from Devo and, in the cuddly sing-along "This World Is Something New to Me," Patti Smith, the B-52's, Laurie Anderson, and Iggy Pop. In a compromise of sorts, Cheryl Chase (in the voice of Angelica) does a toddler-designed remake of Blondie's "One Way or Another." Kids will chuckle; their parents, realizing the passage of time, may be even more depressed than when the Ramones disbanded.

One of the year's most clever tie-ins, **Chef Aid: The**

South Park Album isn't a soundtrack so much as it is a comedy album. Complete with applause and stage introductions, it's presented as the recording of a "concert" to benefit the Chef (the ever-growly Isaac Hayes), with a rainbow coalition of rap, rock, and alt-rock stars paying tribute to him (and, by implication, the cool-cult status of *South Park* itself). The sensibility of producer Rick Rubin, who pioneered rap-metal in the '80s, runs wild throughout. "Nowhere to Run," featuring the seeming-

ly ungainly tag team of Crystal Method, Ozzy Osbourne, DMX, and Ol' Dirty Bastard, is one of the first tracks to make a rap-techno fusion seem logical. Less satisfying are Puff Daddy's latest attempt to cross over to metal ("Will They Die 4 You") and, betraying Rubin's love of classic rock, passable but unexciting contributions by rock vets from Joe Strummer to Elton John.

What constantly redeems the album is the dark humor and musical chops of creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone. Their parodies, from Hayes' double entendre pimp-funk strut "Chocolate Salty Balls (P.S. I Love You)" to croaky renditions of Bad Company and Styx anthems, are funny, loving mockeries. "Tonight Is Right for Love," the Chef's swoony ode to Meredith Baxter-Birney, finds Meat Loaf pitching in to send up his own overheated delivery. Like a comedy album, *Chef Aid* isn't necessarily a disc you'll return to once you've heard the jokes, but its best moments are funnier than anything released in 1998—except, perhaps, for the Vanilla Ice thrash album.

In saluting the glam era, the soundtrack of **Velvet Goldmine** could have been a glittery mess. Its combination of oldies, remakes of oldies, and glam-style new songs had the potential to

make us all long to hear more score music with tin whistles. Instead, it sounds like the freshest rock album that never actually existed. The feather-boia anthems (from Lou Reed, Brian Eno, and Roxy Music) still conjure the delicate decadence of that era's fashion and mood, and remakes of Bryan Ferry's "2HB" and the Stooges' "TV Eye"—featuring vocals by Radiohead's Thom Yorke and film star Ewan McGregor, respectively—give karaoke a good name.

Arty alt-rockers Shudder to Think's two ersatz-Ziggy Stardust cuts are meant to compensate for David Bowie's absence, and they more than do the job; each could have fit perfectly onto a circa-'73 Bowie album. And the normally stultifying Grant Lee Buffalo pull off a British accent and swagger with "The Whole Shebang." Despite its detailed evocation of this moment in the '70s, the movie left those of us who didn't play dress up wondering what we'd missed. The music, which finds a mid-

dle ground between pop sweetness and rock orgy, nails it. What does it say when one of the crispest-sounding rock albums of 1998 sounds as if it were 25 years old? *Psycho*: **B+** *The Rugrats Movie*: **B-** *Chef Aid: The South Park Album*: **B** *Velvet Goldmine*: **A**



Various Artists

Psycho: Music From and Inspired by the Motion Picture
Geffen



Various Artists

The Rugrats Movie: Music From the Motion Picture
Interscope



Various Artists

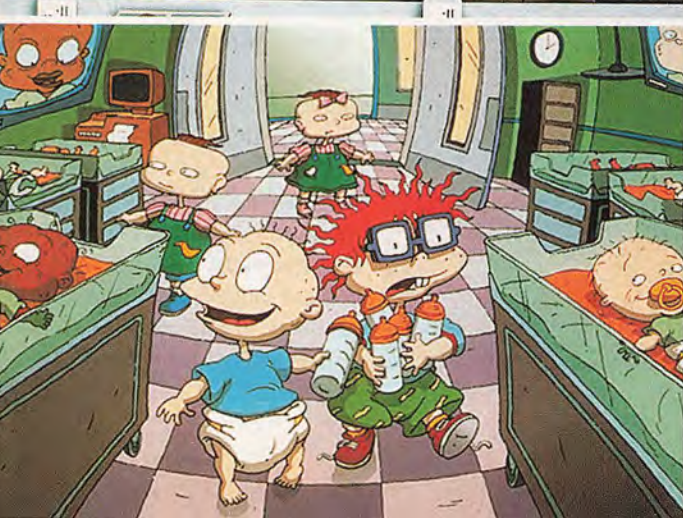
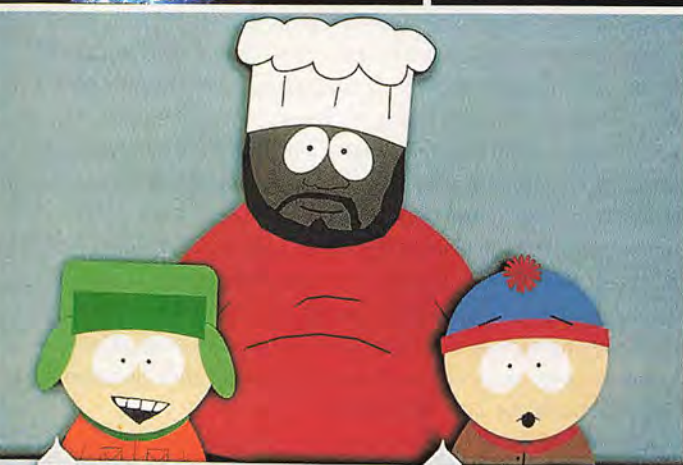
Chef Aid: The South Park Album
American/Columbia



Various Artists

Velvet Goldmine: Music From the Original Motion Picture
Innerstate/London

'TRACK STARS
(This page, top) *Velvet Goldmine*'s thinly disguised white duke; (center) *South Park*'s Chef with Kyle and Stan; (bottom) *The Rugrats*; (opposite page) *Psycho*'s Anne Heche



The Week

Soundtracks

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Jack Frost* (Mercury) It's hard to know whom this soundtrack is meant for. There is a passel of passable tunes by teen faves Hanson, Swirl 360, and the Spice Girls. And terrific cuts by Lucinda Williams and Lisa Loeb are countered by Bob "Butterfly Kisses" Carlisle's treacly "Father's Love" and a Bruce Willis-style, vanity-blues thing by the family film's star, Michael Keaton ("Frosty the Snowman"). Santa's got a mixed bag, baby. **B-** —Beth Johnson

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Touched by an Angel* (550 Music/Sony Music Soundtrax) This set of inspirational-leaning power ballads, from acts country (Faith Hill, Wynonna), pop (Celine Dion, Amy Grant), and God knows where (*Angel* series star Della Reese), poses the important question, Does every prayer in song

have to sound like the *exact same numbing, easy-listening Kodak-commercial piece of glop?* **C-** —DB

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Living Out Loud* (RCA Victor/Jersey) Richard LaGravenese calls his post-divorce saga "a closet musical"—and judging from the fact that he gives Danny DeVito a vocal number, you might think his favorite musical is *Paint Your Wagon*. Actually, DeVito almost comes within spitting distance of carrying a tune, albeit bested by Queen Latifah's creditable three-tune turn as lounge diva. Still, a revival of Brownstone's slinky "If You Love Me"—the new soundtrack for all lipstick lesbian bar fantasies—is the understandable consumer draw. **B** —CW

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Orgazmo* (Nickel-Bag) A near-perfect mix of rap, rock, and lounge wryness produced by Beck brethren the Dust Brothers



SNOW JOB The Hanson kids flake out on the soundtrack to *Jack Frost*

ers for Trey (*South Park*) Parker's soft-core meta-action flick. Surprises include the Cure's Robert Smith representing like NIN with a smirk, a harmonica-spiked hip-hop jam from the Crystal Method, and an underground bomb from rappers Dilated Peoples. Aside from Parker's ill-advised *Spinal Tap* gesture, it's what you wish modern-rock radio sounded like. **A-** —Will Hermes

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Down In the Delta* (Virgin) There's generally nothing more dispiriting than inspirational records. But the mostly R&B soundtrack to Maya Angelou's movie relieves the usual gooey-ness with inventive lyrics, fleet melodies, and spare performances. Chaka Khan comes off wise and witty in "Don't Talk 2 Strangers," Luther Vandross and Cassandra

HEAR AND NOW

This week on the music beat

■ **MAKING TRACKS** Think soundtrack glut was a problem last year? Pop samplers posing as movie souvenirs may proliferate further yet in '99. Encouraged by the success of *City of Angels*, *Armageddon*, and *The Wedding Singer*, studios and labels are scrambling to package whatever platinum musicians their checkbooks will lure. But "everyone's chasing the same artists right now," laments Dominic Griffin, soundtrack columnist for the trade magazine *HITS*. "They're releasing too many. It's gonna have to level out this year."

Tell it to the marketers of upcoming teen-targeted films like *Anywhere But Here*, *Varsity Blues*, *Cruel Intentions*, *Never Been Kissed*, and *Killing Mrs. Tingle*, each currently vying to round up an album's worth of big-name alterna-poppers. Also soliciting the same market will be several television sound-

tracks: A second *Friends* set is in the works, though the first wasn't a smash, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Felicity*, and even *King of the Hill* will get their own albums, too.

The Neve Campbell-Matthew Perry vehicle *Three to Tango* has lined up neo-swingers like Brian Setzer, Cherry Poppin' Daddies, and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy. Ron Howard's *Ed TV* is expected to sport a potential hit from Jon Bon Jovi. Phil Joanou's *Entropy* has U2 playing themselves on and offstage, making the band a good bet for the soundtrack. On the retro front, Elvis Costello and Burt Bacharach have remade "I'll Never Fall in Love Again" for the *Austin Powers* sequel. And more thespians hope to follow Jennifer Love Hewitt's warbling example: Minnie Driver, reported to be seeking a record deal, is cowriting and singing a tune in *At Satchem Farm*, while David Spade will cover Neil Diamond's "Brother Love" for *Lost and Found*.

John Williams' *Star Wars* prequel score album probably won't

be sullied by pop songs. But other composers may follow James Horner, who adapted his *Titanic* theme into a Celine Dion ditty. The venerable Elmer Bernstein, scorer for *The Wild, Wild West*, may cowrite a song with star Will Smith—auguring a historic *Magnificent Seven*-meets-*Men in Black* mix that might stand out from the soundtrack traffic jam. —Chris Willman



U2'S BONO



SETZER



LOSERS OF THE WEEK

The Jesus & Mary Chain

This package, containing a review copy of the band's '94 album *Stoned & Dethroned*, was delivered to EW's offices last week...nearly four and a half years after it was mailed. Who knew Newman was an alt-rock fan?

Wilson seem movingly humble in "I'm Only Human," and D'Angelo captures an erotic sense of devotion in "Heaven Must Be Like This." Moments like these earn your faith. **B+** —Jim Farber

VARIOUS ARTISTS *The Faculty* (Sony Music Soundtrax/Columbia) What a hodgepodge: Soul Asylum and Creed cover Alice Cooper, Shawn Mullins sprinkles '90s stardust on David Bowie's "Changes," and a supergroup featuring members of Alice in Chains, Rage Against the Machine, and Porno for Pyros erects a new version of Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall." Offsetting the refried nostalgia are tracks from Sheryl Crow and Garbage, but D Generation's new retro-glam "Helpless" is the indisputable highlight. **C+** —Tom Sinclair

VARIOUS ARTISTS *The Waterboy* (Hollywood) Skip over the recycled-ad-nauseam classic rock and disco, over Goldfinger's flat ska-punk cover of "More Today Than Yesterday," over the Big Head Todd whiteface blues, over the bad Candlebox and Joe Walsh songs, and click to track 12. Doesn't Rush's Geddy Lee sound just like a prog-rock Opera Man? **C** —DB

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (Geffen) You can bet real witches don't listen to the bubbly ephemera found here. Spice Girls,

Backstreet Boys, 'N Sync, Aqua, Five—all this wholesome cheer would be strictly taboo in even the most good-natured teen coven. And while Sugar Ray's cover of "Abracadabra" at least makes conceptual sense, what's behind Matthew Sweet's less-than-enchanted remake of '70s throwaway "Magnet & Steel"? **C** —Rob Brunner

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Babe: Pig in the City* (Geffen) It's reassuring to hear Peter Gabriel sagely crooning inspirational verse to a pig (on Randy Newman's "That'll Do"). You also get Edith Piaf's "Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien" and Dean Martin's "That's Amore" (originals and mouse versions), plus sound bites, score fragments, and non-film tracks by the Chieftains and the Mavericks. Fine, but it begs the question, Who actually buys these collections? **B-** —WH

VARIOUS ARTISTS *You've Got Mail* (Warner Sunset/Atlantic) Director Nora Ephron sticks to the successful formula of her last Hanks-Ryan outing, *Sleepless in Seattle*. There's a track each from Jimmy Durante and Louis Armstrong, quirky selections (three Nilsson tunes), vintage novelty numbers, plus a sprinkling of newer artists (the Cranberries, Sinéad O'Connor). Some nifty tracks, but as a DJ mix, it makes more sense on screen. **B** —BJ

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Slam* (Immortal/Epic) Considering the name, this rap soundtrack doesn't slam enough, despite tracks by B-boy big Willies like KRS-One and genre-bending contributions from such electronica mavens as DJ Spooky and Esthero. Only Big Punisher's stealthy "Sex Money & Drugs," Q-Tip's bouncy "Hey," and especially Puff disciple Black Rob's naggingly infectious uptown anthem "I Dare You" dunk on both poetics and pumping beats. **B** —Matt Diehl

VARIOUS ARTISTS *The Mississippi: River of Song* (Smithsonian Folkways) This two-CD soundtrack for the PBS series was never fully thought out. The goal was to prove that America remains rich in regionally rooted sounds. Following the Mississippi from north to south, the producers succeed admirably, giving us a crazy quilt of music: Chippewa tribesmen, big-time rockers (Minneapolis' Soul Asylum, Levon Helm), Delta bluesmen, New Orleans street musicians, and more. But the Mississippi is an arbitrary prop; they could just as easily have driven haphazardly around the U.S. **C+** —Tony Scherman

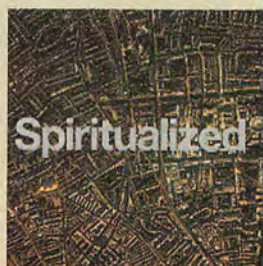
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THE CHARTS

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

WHAT DO commercial pop and college radio listeners have in common? Not

much, except maybe a shared fondness for the brighter side of musical narcolepsy. Folk-rockers Shawn Mullins' self-consciously droll "Lullaby" leads *Billboard's* Top 40 Tracks chart once again, while the *CMJ* Radio 200 is topped by the live album from *Spiritualized*, an alternative band well regarded for its Pink Floyd-like qualities of somnambulism. Once upon a time, the Goo Goo Dolls would have appeared on the college chart, but their reappearance in the Top 40 with "Slide"—up to No. 6—confirms that band's Soul Asylum-style crossover.



COLLEGE ALBUMS

LAST WEEK			WEEKS ON CHART
1	1	SPIRITUALIZED <i>Live at the Albert Hall</i> , deConstruction/Arista	.6
2	2	BECK <i>Mutations</i> , DGC	.8
3	3	JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION <i>Acme</i> , Matador/Capitol	.9
4	7	STEREOLAB <i>Aluminum Tunes</i> , Drag City	.6
5	9	MACHA <i>Macha</i> , Jetset	.8
6	4	R.E.M. <i>Up</i> , Warner Bros.	.8
7	5	AFGHAN WHIGS <i>1965</i> , Columbia	.11
8	6	JETS TO BRAZIL <i>Orange Rhyming Dictionary</i> , Jade Tree	.9
9	12	PORTISHEAD <i>PNYC</i> , Go! Beat/London	.5
10	11	CARDIGANS <i>Gran Turismo</i> , Mercury	.9

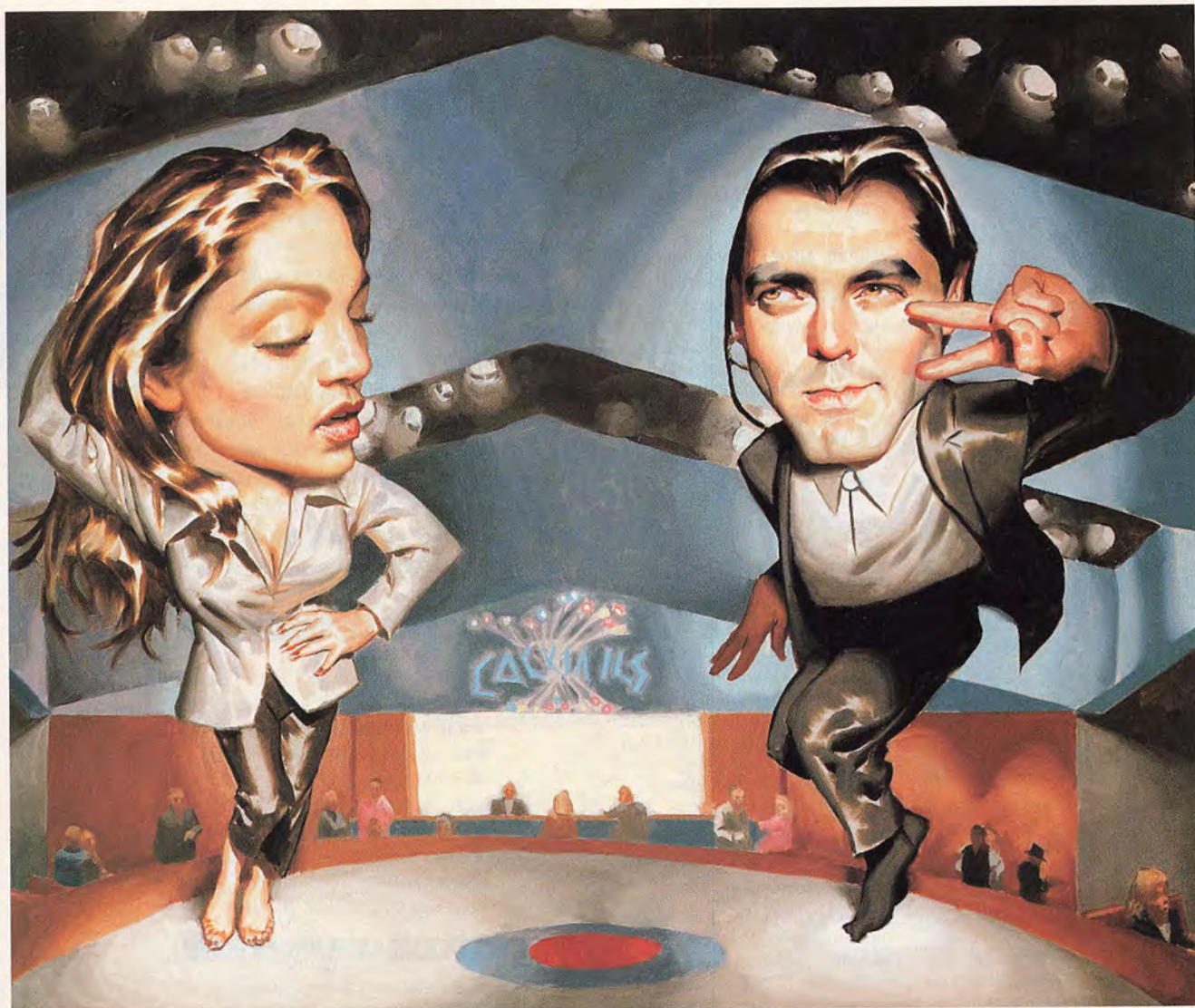
TOP 40 TRACKS

1	1	SHAWN MULLINS "Lullaby," Columbia	.7
2	2	EAGLE-EYE CHERRY "Save Tonight," WORK	.7
3	3	THIRD EYE BLIND "Jumper," Elektra	.7
4	4	JEWEL "Hands," Atlantic	.7
5	5	BRANDY "Have You Ever?," Atlantic	.7
6	7	GOO GOO DOLLS "Slide," Reprise	.7
7	6	BRITNEY SPEARS "...Baby One More Time," Jive	.7
8	8	'N SYNC "(God Must Have Spent) A Little More Time on You," RCA	.7
9	10	WILL SMITH "Miami," Columbia	.7
10	12	SARAH McLACHLAN "Angel," Warner Sunset/Reprise	.7

CONCERTS

	# OF SHOWS		TICKET SALES
1	2	DAVE MATTHEWS BAND Philadelphia	\$1,162,140
2	3	PHISH Worcester, Mass.	\$1,073,573
3	2	DAVE MATTHEWS BAND Worcester, Mass.	\$855,270
4	1	SHANIA TWAIN Fargo, N.D.	\$723,930
5	1	BILLY JOEL Rosemont, Ill.	\$688,958
6	1	NEIL DIAMOND Nashville	\$513,673
7	1	DEPECHE MODE Seattle	\$445,649
8	1	KISS Toronto	\$405,489
9	1	'N SYNC Auburn Hills, Mich.	\$379,138
10	1	AEROSMITH La Crosse, Wis.	\$291,868

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Sans Quentin

Clooney and Lopez may be delectably pulpy, but Steven Soderbergh's outta sight *Out of Sight* is no prisoner of Tarantino. by Troy Patterson

AT THE START OF STEVEN Soderbergh's *Out of Sight*, George Clooney pulls a robbery of such dizzying suavity that he could only have learned it from the movies: He has stormed from a Miami skyscraper in a burst of dumb rage and whipped his necktie to the pavement—freeze-frame here, Clooney caught mid-heave as in some '70s cop show. Then he strides into a

bank and, gently bluffing, tells the teller that a bystander—nodding to a nearby man talking with a banker—will start firing bullets if she doesn't fill a bag with cash. He kindly relieves her of it.

This is, in essence if not detail, the heist the hood played by Tim Roth describes at the start of *Pulp Fiction* (Miramax, R, \$14.99).

That Soderbergh, a wry genius whose *sex, lies, and videotape* (Columbia TriStar, R, \$14.95) reinspired U.S. indie film in 1989, should borrow a riff from Quentin Tarantino, another indie virtuoso whose *Pulp Fiction* first exhilarated us in 1994, is neither cute homage nor simple larceny. Rather, Soderbergh has explored

Tarantino's terrain—playing on his reanimated anachronisms and hyperacute allusions, his feeling for the possibilities of stylized small talk and the occult connections made by compulsive moviegoers—and made the most subtle, sensuous film to come out of Hollywood in the last year.

And it is very much a Hollywood film in its taste for high-gloss glamour and old noir trickiness, which may lead fans of the spare, arty *sex, lies, and videotape* to wonder: Nine years and this is what he comes up with? In fact, *Out of Sight* is a natural advance. *Sex*, which details a stretch of spiritual tundra

Out of Sight

1998
UNIVERSAL
\$106.99
RATED R

lately mapped by Neil LaBute and Todd Solondz, is about a slimily vulnerable Baton Rouge lawyer who cheats on his frigid wife with her sister. Drifting in to smash the trio's smugness is James Spader's Graham, a college friend of the husband's. Graham is impotent, satisfied only by watching his videotaped interviews with women talking about sex. The director has said that the film—a chamber piece about obsession, deception, and the temptation to let motion pictures stand in for emotion—is “emotionally” autobiographical.

So, six ambitious films later, this movie-mad auteur sets to work in a noir climate defined by *Pulp Fiction*. Tarantino's second film is a scrambled triptych of dime-store dramas, a wholly accessible update of Godard's French-fried gangster films, starring John Travolta and Samuel L. Jackson as chatty hitmen, Bruce Willis as a half-punchy boxer, and Uma Thurman as a spoiled gun moll. Myriad hacks have aped its knowing tone, fractured chronology, and obsessive pop references, while almost willfully missing its point.

Tarantino, a textbook case of information overload, takes sublime delight in the movie's movieness. Jackson's gangster is a character conscious that he must “get into character” to intimidate some punks. Willis, unexpectedly called on to execute swordplay, moves with such startling elegance it's as if he momentarily becomes a samurai-movie hero. Shock devices—say, a slo-mo shot of Ving Rhames cocking a gun—are weighted to carry ironic kitsch value, genuinely thrilling trashiness, and (thereby) sophisticated effect.

Like Tarantino's *Jackie*

Brown, *Out of Sight* began as an Elmore Leonard novel; the finest of all hack writers churns out paperback fantasies marked by a playfulness that lends itself well to the directors' visions. (The films even share a costar and character, Michael Keaton's federal agent Ray Nicolette; on the *Out of Sight* DVD, Soderbergh says he visited Tarantino's editing room to check out Keaton's act.) *Sight's* freeze-frames, slow fades, and (in a scene between Clooney and Jennifer Lopez, the marshal

on his tail) evocative voice-overs are old tricks that feel new because they prove essential rather than ornamental. Style here is substantive.

Plotwise, *Pulp Fiction's* inventions stoked the mind for *Sight's* flashily economical flashbacks. Soderbergh and screenwriter Scott Frank lay it out elliptically: As Clooney's Jack Foley and his buddy Buddy (Rhames) set off for one last heist, the back stories actually drive the plot forward by disclosing the pair's relations with dopey

accomplice Glenn (Steve Zahn), ruthless accomplice Snoopy (Don Cheadle), and their mutual mark Ripley, who has \$5 million in gems stashed in a Detroit mansion.

Out of Sight is a basic crime story made baroque by its satisfaction of the reasonable demand of an audience as jaded as Spader's *sex, lies* videophile—to be tricked into believing. Tarantino's achievement was to show us how we respond to pulp; Soderbergh's is to show us why. **sex: A- Pulp: A Out: A-**

FAST FORWARD

The latest from the home-video front

■ **THE MARKET GETS ANTZY** Ah, winter, time of interesting wrinkles in the movie-video continuum. It's usually five or six months before a major-studio release appears on tape, but this is the season of delightful exceptions, as those twin lodestars, Christmas and the Oscars, distort Hollywood space-time. Low-trajectory late-summer movies like *The Parent Trap* get pulled into the black hole of early December; high-flying titles whiz into 1999. For example, June's *The Truman Show* comes to tape Jan. 12, *Mulan* and *There's Something About Mary* hit the street Feb. 2, and July's *Saving Private Ryan* is nowhere in sight—unless you count the theaters that will stage its pre-Oscar rerelease next month.

Duplicating a strategy that worked last January for *Soul Food*, the **Jackie Chan-Chris Tucker** action-comedy *Rush Hour*, (which opened Sept. 25) is hurrying to a Jan. 26 tape date. And after seeing Disney's *A Bug's Life* climb to the top of the box office, DreamWorks announced that its own insect cartoon, the \$87 million-grossing *Antz*, will hit stores on Feb. 9, just four months after its big-screen opening. “We want to create a constant stream of consumer aware-

Life date is set but top secret (April would be six months post-premiere; October would fit the leisurely *Toy Story* template) and that *Antz* “was a consideration.” The

source adds that in the interest of competition, Disney will reprice another bug title: The French documentary *MicroCosmos* will soon be available for \$9.99. —Beth Pinsker



ANTZ

■ **HE'S NO SELLOUT** If you

add up the claims of its several distributors (MPI, MVP, and NetFlix.com), the quickie videos of **President Clinton's** grand-jury testimony sold about 165,000 copies in the three months before the congressional endgame began, almost all those sales coming in the first two weeks, before public disgust solidified. Any misgivings about their part in history? MVP sales director Darryl Kanoose thinks not. “We’ve done a tape on Ginger Spice’s nude-modeling career,” he notes. “Controversy? Bring it on.” —Michael Giltz



CLINTON

The Week

Recent Movies

HOW STELLA GOT HER GROOVE BACK Angela Bassett, Whoopi Goldberg (1998, Fox, R, \$103.99) Embittered meanies (a.k.a. critics) can cavil all they want about this movie's superficiality—it won't stop an army of women from landing in video stores on release day. That's because it offers something more potent than depth: monumental wish fulfillment, not to mention as many chic costume changes as a Saks window. Thus 40-year-old divorcee Stella (the ravishing Bassett) sweeps off to a deluxe Jamaican resort with an

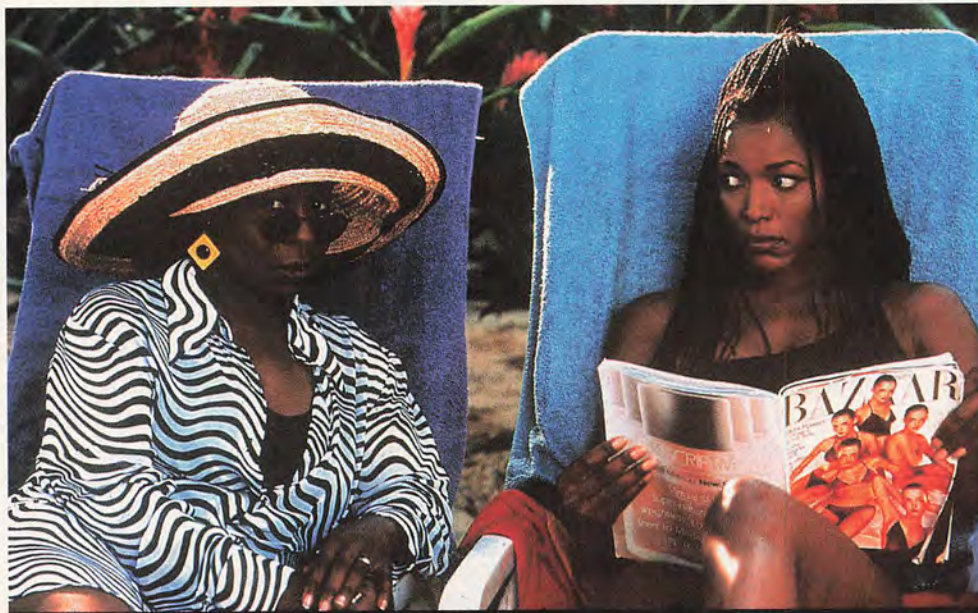
eccentric pal (Goldberg) and meets a native with the body of a god. Only problem: He's half her age. But good sex and clothing can conquer all, even yacky scripts. And though Stella learns that money can't buy happiness, it helps when you want to get to the beach and look your best. **C+** —Melissa Pierson

DISTURBING BEHAVIOR James Marsden, Katie Holmes (1998, MGM, R, \$103.99) Remember *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*? Take away the subtlety and suspense and you're left with this Paranoia 101 sci-fi horror in which a teen hunk (Marsden) enrolls

in a new high school and notices something odd about the student elite: These squeaky-clean over-achievers with Terminator strength and a habit of killing people might not be such good kids after all. If it were more flamboyant, the movie might have qualified as camp. **D** —David Everett

THE AVENGERS Ralph Fiennes, Uma Thurman, Sean Connery (1998, Warner, PG, \$106.99) It's possible I couldn't comprehend this movie simply because it kept lulling me to sleep, but a sentient viewing confirmed that the film version of the '60s spy series is 90 minutes of mild nonsense. Thurman is the kinkily clad Emma Peel, Fiennes the spruce John Steed, and Connery the kilted baddie planning to kidnap the weather. Together, the actors succeed in maintaining professional dignity. **C-** —TP

BASKETBALL Trey Parker, Matt Stone, Yasmine Bleeth, Jenny McCarthy (1998, Universal, R, \$106.99) *South Park* creators Parker and Stone's feature debut exhibits none of the infectious offhand tastelessness of their hit show and all of the insistent overkill of a Mel Brooks joke gone horribly wrong. As creators of a new sport that takes America by storm, the duo vomit, curse, and insult their way through a *Wayne's World*-style assortment of misadventures involving romantic entanglements and evil corporate types. Their incessant, obscene banter is meant to be endearing; their total lack of presence makes it simply annoying. Some funny sight gags (like football players Riverdancing in post-touchdown glee) and game supporting performances from Robert Vaughn and McCarthy are wasted in the process. **D+** —Bilge Ebiri



STELLA BY STARPOWER Basking in the Caribbean heat, Goldberg convinces Bassett that life can be a beach

HIGH ART Ally Sheedy, Radha Mitchell (1998, Universal, R, \$98.99) Who knew that Brat Packer Sheedy would shine as a heroin-addicted photographer who had too much fame too early? First-time director Lisa Cholodenko puts Sheedy in the middle of a tug-of-war between the nubile editor (Mitchell) who wants to pull her out of hiding and the willowy girlfriend (Patricia Clarkson) who wants to snort dope and sleep. The drug scenes are as seedy as they come. **A-** —Beth Pinsker

WHY DO FOOLS FALL IN LOVE Larenz Tate, Vivica A. Fox, Halle Berry, Lela Rochon (1998, Warner, R, \$103.99) Tate has the moves but not Frankie Lymon's voice in this biopic about the competing claims on the doo-wop singer's estate by three women who thought themselves his wife. With Lymon's life story told in disjointed flashbacks between courtroom scenes, the talented cast doesn't have a chance. **C-** —BP

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MASKED MAN
OF THE WEEK I

Brad Pitt

On Jan. 12, Fox releases 1988's *Dark Side of the Sun*, Pitt's long-lost first movie. But you won't see much of him; most of the time his 24-year-old face is shrouded in darkness or in a bondage mask.

MASKED MAN
OF THE WEEK II

RZA

Next month, the Wu-Tang Clan member masquerades as his alter ego in *Bobby Digital*, a straight-to-tape companion piece to his new album.

BILLY'S HOLLYWOOD SCREEN KISS Sean Hayes, Brad Rowe (1998, Trimark, R, \$101.99) Although this charming, featherweight romantic comedy unfolds against a backdrop of lip-synching drag queens, at its heart is the old story of a boy and his object of desire. That the boy, a photographer named Billy (Hayes of TV's *Will & Grace*), happens to be gay and the blond love object a male model (Rowe) is of no thundering social significance. Indeed, freshman writer-director Tommy O'Haver's matter-of-factness about their sexuality is what seems revolutionary. **B+** —Caren Weiner Campbell

MR. JEALOUSY Eric Stoltz, Annabella Sciorra, Chris Eigeman (1998, BMG Independents, R, \$97.99) There's a terrific, delicious farce struggling to emerge from this likable romantic comedy, in which Lester Grimm (Stoltz), consumed by you-know-what, joins the therapy group of his girlfriend's ex-lover (a hilariously arrogant Eigeman), hoping to find out more about her past. Lest

Lester give himself away, he poses as his best friend Vince (Carlos Jacott); then Vince joins the group posing as Lester. The comic possibilities are limitless; unfortunately, by the time writer-director Noah Baumbach (whose *Kicking and Screaming* was far superior) stumbles onto what ought to have been the plot's engine, his comparatively drab destination is already in view. **C+** —Mike D'Angelo

MIDAQ ALLEY Salma Hayek, Ernesto Gómez Cruz (1998, Fox Lorber, unrated, subtitled, \$89.98) A pre-Hollywood Hayek is the only reason to rent this 1995 Mexican drama, yet she's in only a third of it—playing a widow's innocent daughter who, abandoned by her true love, is seduced into a life of drugs and prostitution. Never mind the lost honor; it's the crushed spirit that gets you. **C+** —Michael Sauter

Documentary

PROJECT GRIZZLY (1998, First Run Features, unrated, \$29.95) Troy Hurtubise is a man obsessed. Ever since his 1984 meeting with a grizzly in British Columbia (which left him, inexplicably, unhurt), the Ontario scrap-metal dealer has devoted himself to "close-quarter bear research." Director Peter Lynch's entertaining film follows Hurtubise as he tests his 7'2", 147-pound, \$150,000 titanium-and-rubber encounter suit (inspired, he says, by *RoboCop*). Lurching around like an arthritic robot, the real-life action hero gets rammed by a tree trunk, walks through fire, and undergoes a beating by three big men with bats. Too bad the lack of mobility poses a problem when he actually tracks a bear in the Canadian Rockies. Through it all, however, Hurtubise demonstrates good-humored macho and fascination with his ursine quarry. **A** —CWC

Also Released

The splendidly campy **DEVIL IN THE FLESH** (1998, A-Pix, R, \$94.98) amounts to *Poison Ivy Meets Serial Mom*, as a deadpan Rose McGowan plays a nubile young psychopath.... Imagine a Hitchcockian noir inflected with the tawdriness of "erotic thrillers," the dramatic tension of a head-cleaning tape, and the honed thespianism of Luke Perry. You are imagining **INDISCREET** (1998, Columbia TriStar, R, \$98.99).... In the cop thriller **SCARRED CITY** (1998, Trimark, R, \$79.99), Chazz Palminteri is a bad lieutenant and Stephen Baldwin is just plain bad. —TP

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THE CHARTS

THE FOLLOW-UPS LEAD

ARTISTIC WORTH aside, sequels are proving as valuable as ever: Both of the rental chart's top debuts were installments that outclassed their most recent predecessors. *Lethal Weapon 4* grabbed the No. 1 spot, besting the third-place debut of 1992's *Lethal Weapon 3*. Meanwhile, the seventh *Halloween* movie took seventh place, thus giving the heebie-jeebies to far more viewers than *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, which entered the chart at No. 22 in 1996. And moving from All Hallows' Eve to Christmas, *Titanic* proved a popular stocking stuffer as holiday shoppers buoyed it back to the top of the sales chart.



WEAPON 4, HIGH 5 Danny Glover reconnects with Mel

TAPE RENTALS

LAST WEEK			WEEKS ON CHART
1	—	LETHAL WEAPON 4 Mel Gibson, Warner	1
2	1	DR. DOLITTLE Eddie Murphy, Fox	4
3	3	SIX DAYS, SEVEN NIGHTS Harrison Ford, Touchstone	2
4	2	THE MASK OF ZORRO Antonio Banderas, Columbia TriStar	3
5	4	ARMAGEDDON Bruce Willis, Touchstone	6
6	5	THE NEGOTIATOR Samuel L. Jackson, Warner	4
7	—	HALLOWEEN: H2O Jamie Lee Curtis, Dimension	1
8	6	THE PARENT TRAP Dennis Quaid, Walt Disney	2
9	7	THE HORSE WHISPERER Robert Redford, Touchstone	6
10	10	HOPE FLOATS Sandra Bullock, Fox	9

TAPE SALES

1	5	TITANIC Leonardo DiCaprio, Paramount, \$22.99	16
2	2	ARMAGEDDON Bruce Willis, Touchstone, \$22.99	6
3	4	DR. DOLITTLE Eddie Murphy, Fox, \$19.98	4
4	1	THE PARENT TRAP Dennis Quaid, Walt Disney, \$22.99	2
5	3	THE MASK OF ZORRO Antonio Banderas, Columbia TriStar, \$22.99	3
6	7	GONE WITH THE WIND Vivien Leigh, MGM, \$19.95	8
7	6	THE WEDDING SINGER Adam Sandler, New Line, \$14.98	3
8	8	THE LION KING II: SIMBA'S PRIDE Animated, Walt Disney, \$26.99	8
9	—	MADELINE Frances McDormand, Columbia TriStar, \$24.99	1
10	9	GOOD WILL HUNTING Matt Damon, Miramax, \$22.99	3

DIRECT-TO-TAPE RENTALS

1	1	THE LION KING II: SIMBA'S PRIDE Animated, Walt Disney	8
2	2	BILLBOARD DAD Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen, Warner	6
3	3	THE LAND BEFORE TIME VI: THE SECRET OF SAURUS ROCK Animated, Universal	3
4	4	RICHIE RICH'S CHRISTMAS WISH David Gallagher, Warner	6
5	—	POINT BLANK Mickey Rourke, Sterling	1
6	5	OPERATION CONDOR 2: THE ARMOUR OF THE GODS Jackie Chan, Dimension	5
7	—	STICKS AND STONES Kirstie Alley, Artisan	1
8	6	EVERYTHING THAT RISES Dennis Quaid, Warner	3
9	—	DOUBLE EDGE Michael Biehn, Orion	2
10	9	AN ALL DOGS CHRISTMAS CAROL Animated, MGM	5

SOURCE: VIDEO BUSINESS FOR THE WEEK ENDING DEC. 20, 1998

All About Eve

Nothing to do for New Year's Eve 1999? With the clock ticking away, another kind of Y2K hysteria hits the Net. **by Gillian Flynn**

SO YOU WOKE UP JAN. 1 IN A QUEASY quasi-panic attack. Was it that recurring Dick Clark dream—or the stark realization that you now have less than a year to plan for the *Really Big One*? Yes, the juggernaut that is New Year's Eve 1999 rolls ever closer, and it has your name on it. Never fear, though. The Internet can help.

First, work yourself into an appropriate millennial frenzy: Bookmark one of the many Internet countdown clocks and watch those months-weeks-days-hours-minutes-seconds sift away. Which to choose? We suggest the celebrated **Greenwich Meridian** timer (millennium.greenwich2000.com/countdown), which, being the official countdown for the "home of time," has more cachet than a countdown from, say, **Junior Philatelists on the Internet** (www.ioa.com/~ggayland/count/countdown.html).

Your next step: Prepare some talking points. There are snuffy Gregorian purists out there eager to mock you for celebrating the second millennium in the year 2000 rather than 2001. Luckily, there are almost as many sites springing to your defense. Scott Cook's **Cloth Monkey** (www.geocities.com/~clothmonkey/millennium.htm) offers erudite justifications for premature partying, such as explaining that pro-2001 calendars were created by monks with "little knowledge of the Arabic notion of zero." Zing.

Then find something impressive to do. Start with the mother of New Year's Eve sites: the painstakingly categorized, shockingly well linked **Millennium Alliance** site (www.igc.org/millennium/events). Here you can party-hunt by region (including Africa, Asia, and the Middle East). And you can look up such events as "Drumming in the Year 2000," in which percussionists round the world will bang in uni-

son during the final hours of '99. Or if you just want to make sure you're packed in a small area with masses of people you don't know or care about, there's a Mega Event section, detailing million-people parties in such places as New York and Rome.

Another solid clearinghouse site is the newsy and oft-updated **Everything 2000** (www.everything2000.com). Not only can this site set you up for Dec. 31—the concert information alone (Phish, the Judds' reunion) is unrivaled—it can link you to entire year 2000 movements. Wanna go on a pilgrimage to Bethlehem? Clean up the ocean? Hang out with pagans? Everything 2000 has the info—along with your chance to purchase lovely millennium glassware (\$22.50 per goblet).

In a similar vein, **Countdown2000** (www.countdown2000.com), run from Pasadena by one John Letts, offers links to major parties around the world, many of which have smart sites of their own. And humble ambitions: Choose from events like Southern California's Party 2000, the "biggest concert and party ever on Planet Earth," and the Billennium, "uniting the world across all 24 time zones." Handily, after you make your plans, you can prepare for the end of the world with links to doomsday-prophecy sites like **Armageddon Books** (www.armageddonbooks.com).

And what happens after New Year's Eve 1999? Letts, who's trying to turn his fledgling site into a business, is banking that the millennium buzz still has another year left in it—provided the pesky Y2K bug behaves itself. "From my standpoint, 2001 will be a nice little party as well," he says. "I'm hoping we'll get two bangs for the buck...and I'm hoping the Internet stays up." ■

>> Hotlink to The Web Guide
at www.ew.com <<

Dream Weaver

ET TU, PLAYSTATION? The videogame industry's high-stakes arms race heated up considerably when the Dreamcast play-er—Sega's latest bid to win back the fickle thumbs of gamers—went on sale in Japan at the height of the holiday season. Hardcore customers in Tokyo lined up at the crack of dawn to snatch them up; stores sold out of their initial shipment of 150,000 units in less than a day. After its last console—the Edsel-like Saturn—was handily run over and left for dead by PlayStation and Nintendo 64, the House That Sonic Built isn't kidding around: The compact Dreamcast has four times the graphics muscle of Sony's reigning gaming unit, can output 64 booming channels of sound, and is Internet capable, all for under \$250. Few titles are available now, but expect a large selection when Dreamcast makes a high-profile U.S. debut in fall 1999. By then, will gamers care about another game box? "Players are looking for the next level," says a Sega spokesman, "and we'll have a dozen [titles] available at next fall's launch that'll blow them away. This isn't a one-hit platform." —Gary Eng Walk



THE DREAMCAST

CYBERTALK

BAD RAP

◀ "I went to a music store and bought quite a few tapes. They were of value in two ways. First, the music. And then the printed lyrics, which, I must say, are considerably more idiotic than mine. I had to lift them a level or two." —TOM WOLFE

on prepping to write rap lyrics for his novel *A Man in Full*, on barnesandnoble.com

"It's my art and it works for the film and that's what comes first and foremost. It's not like I'm doing it for the purpose of titillating men—it's not a beer commercial, you know?" —GWYNETH PALTROW on doing nude scenes for *Shakespeare in Love*, on Entertainment Tonight Online

"[I] gave it to my daughter for her collection of daddy dolls!" —LEVAR BURTON on his *Star Trek: Insurrection* LaForge action figure, on TVGen.com

TOP SOFTWARE

SIBLING HARMONY

THE RUGRATS HAVE TWO CD-ROMS in the top 20. So does Barbie. Luckily there's no need for temper tantrums—they'll all soon be living under the same roof. In December, Barbie game maker Mattel announced plans to acquire *Rugrats* game owner The Learning Company for about \$3.8 billion. TLC brings with it more than a bunch of babies: As the proud parent of Brøderbund, it boasts chart dominators *Myst* and *Riven*. Dream crossover? Sirrus and Achenar battling an evil life force called Angelica.



TOP 20 CD-ROMS

LAST MONTH

- 1 DEER HUNTER II 3-D GT Interactive, PC 2
- 2 MICROSOFT WINDOWS 98 UPGRADE Microsoft, PC 1
- 3 BLUE'S ABC TIME ACTIVITIES Humongous, PC and Mac 5
- 4 BARBIE RIDING CLUB Mattel Media, PC—
- 5 LEGO ISLAND Learning Company, PC 20
- 6 MICROSOFT ENCARTA ENCYCLOPEDIA Microsoft, PC 4
- 7 MICROSOFT COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR Microsoft, PC—
- 8 BLUE'S BIRTHDAY ADVENTURE Humongous, PC and Mac 15
- 9 NORTON ANTIVIRUS 5.0 Symantec, PC and Mac 7
- 10 RUGRATS MOVIE ACTIVITY CHALLENGE Brøderbund, PC and Mac—
- 11 CABELA'S BIG GAME HUNTER 2 Activision, PC—
- 12 HALF-LIFE Cendant Software, PC—
- 13 PRINTMASTER PREMIER 7.0 Learning Company, PC 11
- 14 BARBIE NAIL DESIGNER Mattel Media, PC 17
- 15 QUICKEN DELUXE Intuit, PC and Mac 6
- 16 PLAY WITH THE TELETUBBIES Knowledge Adventure, PC—
- 17 HOT WHEELS STUNT TRACK DRIVER Mattel Media, PC—
- 18 RUGRATS ADVENTURE GAME Brøderbund, PC and Mac—
- 19 STARCRRAFT Cendant Software, PC 16
- 20 MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR Microsoft, PC—

TOP 5 PC GAMES

- 1 DEER HUNTER II 3-D GT Interactive 1
- 2 BARBIE RIDING CLUB Mattel Media—
- 3 LEGO ISLAND Learning Company 8
- 4 MICROSOFT COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR Microsoft—
- 5 CABELA'S BIG GAME HUNTER 2 Activision—

TOP 5 MACINTOSH GAMES

- 1 NASCAR I Cendant Software 1
- 2 MONOPOLY GAME Hasbro Interactive 4
- 3 TOMB RAIDER II Aspyr 7
- 4 STAR WARS REBEL ASSAULT LucasArts—
- 5 UNREAL GT Interactive 2

TOP 5 REFERENCE

- 1 MICROSOFT ENCARTA ENCYCLOPEDIA Microsoft 1
- 2 WORLD BOOK ENCYCLOPEDIA DELUXE 99 IBM—
- 3 WORLD BOOK ENCYCLOPEDIA STANDARD 99 IBM 3
- 4 MICROSOFT ENCARTA REFERENCE SUITE Microsoft 5
- 5 GROLIER MULTIMEDIA ENCYCLOPEDIA 99 DELUXE Grolier—

SOURCE: PC DATA (ALL RANKINGS ARE PROJECTIONS)

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EYES ON THE ICE Kerrigan fields questions at a press conference eight days after the attack (left); with one less competitor, Harding triumphs at the nationals



Ice Follies

ENCORE

Five years ago, the rivalry between Nancy Kerrigan and Tonya Harding took a violent turn. by Matthew McCann Fenton

WHY ME? WHY NOW?" NANCY KERRIGAN sobbed in front of onlookers after an assailant smashed her right leg with a metal rod Jan. 6, 1994. Kerrigan, then 24, had been practicing at a Detroit arena for the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, where she was a favorite. But once

she was sidelined by bruises, top honors went to rival Tonya Harding, 23.

Within two weeks, four Harding cronies, including ex-husband Jeff Gillooly, had been

arrested. (Gillooly and Shawn Eckardt eventually pleaded guilty to racketeering; Shane Stant and Derrick Smith, to conspiracy to commit second-degree assault.) The team had

been so inept, though, that even Kerrigan later howled at its antics—like when clubman Stant had to interrupt stalking his prey every 30 minutes to move a parked car.

Facing possible exclusion from the games, Harding sued and was allowed to compete alongside a recovered Kerrigan. In the media frenzy before the Olympics, the skaters became pop-culture celebs. On Feb. 23, their televised Lillehammer duel drew more than 45 million U.S. households. (It's the sixth-highest-rated telecast ever.) They were also immortalized in quickie books and a TV movie.

After the games, Harding pleaded guilty to the felony of "hindering prosecution" and was

sentenced to three years' probation. The U.S. Figure Skating Association eventually took away her national title and banned her from skating.

She faced Kerrigan again in early '98, when Fox aired an interview for which each was reportedly paid more than \$100,000. But anyone hoping for revelations was disappointed. Harding stuck to the story that she had no advance knowledge of the attack, and all Kerrigan would say was "I am glad you moved on, and I hope that you can find happiness."

While skating jobs for Harding remain scarce, Kerrigan is currently starring as Sandy in a touring production called *Grease on Ice*. ■



FACE-OFF The rivals at the '94 Olympics

time capsule / jan. 6, 1994

AT THE MOVIES, Mrs. Doubtfire is No. 1 at theaters. Robin Williams' (right) flick would earn \$423 million worldwide. He'd return to "family" comedy with '96's *The Birdcage*. **IN MUSIC**, Mariah Carey's "Hero" tops the singles charts, earning her a Grammy nod for



Best Female Pop Vocal. In '97, Carey would split with her husband, Sony Music honcho Tommy Mottola, but continue to record for his company. **IN BOOKSTORES**, Robert James Waller's *Slow Waltz in Cedar Bend* and *The Bridges of Madison County* are best-sellers. Clint Eastwood would direct

and star in the '95 movie version of *Bridges*. **AND IN THE NEWS**, Dr. Jack Kevorkian is ordered to stand trial for his 20th assisted suicide; he'd be acquitted in '96. In '98 he would plead not guilty to first-degree murder charges for a videotaped death aired on *60 Minutes*. —MMF



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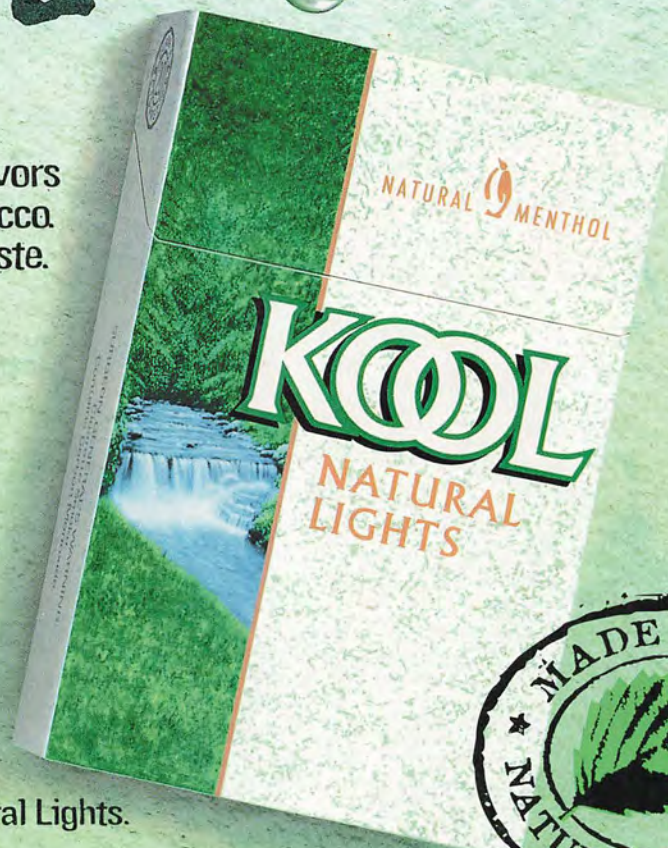
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